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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON



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TORONTO



Medea persuades King Pelias and his daughters that she can restore his youth by magic arts: she proves her powers by restoring life to a ram
(Attic vase-painting of the sixth century B C, in the British Museum.)

The Life and Death of Jason

A Poem

By
William Morris

Abridged and Edited for Schools by

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MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1923

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FRONTISPIECE

Medea persuades King Pelias and his daughters that she can restore his youth by magic arts: she proves her powers by restoring life to a ram. (Attic vase-painting of the sixth century B.C., in the British Museum.)

NOTE

The numbering of the first nine books in this edition corresponds with the numbering in the complete work. Books VII, VIII., IX. are given in full. Book X. in this volume comprises extracts from Books 10, 11, 12 of the complete work; Books XI. and XII correspond to parts of Books 14 and 16 respectively, and Books XIII. and XIV. are parts of Book 17 in the original.

INTRODUCTION

I. THE POEM

IN modern times, when a man wishes to tell a story or paint a picture of ancient days, he tries to find out what the people of those days looked like, their clothes, their armour, their houses and temples, and to reproduce these details accurately in his story or picture. That is because in modern times, as a result of increasing knowledge, the 'historic sense' has been developed; enormous pains are taken to distinguish the characteristics of different ages.

But this way of looking at things is altogether modern. The great Italian painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when they painted the scenes of the New Testament, never thought of asking what Palestine was like, or what garments people wore in the time of Christ. They painted the Apostles in the costumes of their own time, with a background of Tuscan or Umbrian hills. So too in England, when Chaucer told an old Greek story, he unconsciously turned the Greek warriors into mediaeval knights with mediaeval castles, because these were the warriors familiar to him. And you remember that in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the conspirators wear Elizabethan cloaks and Elizabethan clocks strike the hour.

Now William Morris lived in the nineteenth century, when the more accurate study of ancient times was beginning, and you might expect him to observe the newer methods. But he did not. The reason was this. He was a great lover of Chaucer and of the Middle Ages, and he had soaked himself in them so completely that, when he pictured to himself the scenes and incidents

of this old Greek story of Jason, he saw them all through the eyes, as it were, of Chaucer and the men of the Middle Ages in England.

It is a curious kind of confusion, if we like to call it so, but Morris's absorption in the mediæval world is so genuine that the result—a blending of three ages—the combination of an ancient Greek story with mediæval surroundings and with the modern love of Nature which Morris brought in from his own generation—is a poem of great charm. We have no unpleasant feeling that the combination is artificial. Morris's genius has transported us into an imaginative world of his own creation, a land of dreams beside which the creations of our own fancy appear vague, dull and drab. The pictures he calls up for us stand out vivid and clear; they are full of wonderful colour and of imaginative detail accurately and lovingly drawn; and the atmosphere that pervades them is as fresh as that of a June morning in the 'rose-hung lanes of woody Kent' of Chaucer's day.

In the story itself will be found most of the familiar ingredients of Romance. Its central motive, that of a Quest, is contained in all romances. It is also not an uncommon resource to add further zest to the adventure by making the seekers ignorant of the exact conditions attaching to its accomplishment, and by adding a love interest and making the hero depend upon his lover's aid to achieve success. Another common feature is the interposition of minor incidents by the way to retard the action and whet the reader's appetite for the final issue. Witchcraft and divine interference are often introduced to add mystery and complications. The wronged heir, the wicked uncle, the ill-used wife, the monster to be exterminated, the conquest of seemingly insuperable obstacles, the performance of superhuman tasks, the traversing of unknown and barbarous tracts—the story of Jason contains them all.

In the art of telling a story Morris was a deft master. Even when dulness and monotony would appear to be unavoidable, he keeps his readers enlivened with side incidents and bits of characterization and scenic description, in which he gives his inventiveness full play. He carries us on from adventure to adventure with an ease and rapidity that surprise us. The quality of his

poetry, with its even flow of excellence, materially helps to produce this effect.

Morris was a craftsman, and plied many crafts with skill and success. Poetry, too, he regarded as a craft—thus reverting to the original idea of the Greek word *poiesis*. He scoffed at poetic inspiration, and spoke of ‘making’ poetry as he would of carving the back of a chair or of weaving tapestry. Indeed, his narrative poetry has the same characteristics as tapestry—each episode a panel dexterously woven with the clear high lights and deep shadows, the skilfully contrasted primary colours and exactitude of detail, of old Flemish tapestries or of the paintings of Morris’s own friends the Pre-Raphaelite artists. The *Life and Death of Jason* is a rapid succession of enchanting pictures of which vivid impressions will remain long in the reader’s mind.

II. LIFE AND WORK OF WILLIAM MORRIS

William Morris was born on the 24th of March, 1834, at Woodford Hall on the northern outskirts of Epping Forest. In his early years here and at Marlborough College he learned to study and appreciate Nature, and to acquire an intimacy with her moods and changes that is reflected in all his works. In 1853 he went up to Exeter College, Oxford, where he began a life-long friendship with Edward Burne-Jones. Together they caught the spirit of mediaeval Romance in the pages of Malory and Spenser, and they were the central figures in a small circle of friends who met to read and discuss poetry. They also published a monthly paper—the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*—in which Morris’s early poetical efforts first appeared.

At the end of his University career, Morris became apprenticed to an architect in Oxford. Meanwhile Burne-Jones had gone to London to study painting. Both young men came under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood—a band of painters, of whom Rossetti, Millais and Holman Hunt were the chief, who were in revolt against the conventional art-standards of the day. In 1857 Morris threw up his architect’s work and devoted himself to painting. But if he was not destined to practise as an architect, it was in design, and not in painting, that his natural bent lay.

In 1859 he married, and after marriage came the problem of obtaining a house and furnishing and decorating it. To this we owe the beginnings of a project which was to engage the main course of Morris's activities for the remainder of his life. The domestic architecture, furniture and upholstery of the time were ugly, pretentious and vulgar, and Morris found it impossible to obtain even a simple article—a chair or a table—that combined usefulness and durability with beauty of design. Hence came the inauguration in 1861 of the firm of 'Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and the Metals.' Many of his Oxford friends were associated in this enterprise, as well as Rossetti and Ford Madox Brown, but Morris was the moving spirit and the most indefatigable worker among them all. Furniture, glass, embroidery and tiles were first produced, but paper-hangings, chintzes, carpets, tapestries, dyeing and stained-glass were taken in hand one after the other with striking success. Morris combined skill in designing with a remarkable aptitude for handicraft of every kind. As each new industry was undertaken, he quickly mastered its technicalities and made valuable contributions to its development, and at the same time helped to improve the public taste.

Seldom has genius been so versatile. He was a poet as well as a craftsman, and refused the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford and the Poet Laureateship which was offered to him on Tennyson's death. But Poetry was only another craft to Morris. His first volume of poems, *The Defence of Guinevere*, was published in 1858, but was indifferently received. In 1866, when the work of Morris & Co. was well under way, he began planning and writing a series of romances called *The Earthly Paradise*. The first tale to be completed was *The Life and Death of Jason*, which had grown so long that it was published separately in 1867; the remainder followed during the next three years. His other great poetical achievement, *Sigurd the Volsung*, stories drawn from the Norse Sagas, was the result of a visit to Iceland, and was published in 1876.

The publication of the *Earthly Paradise* led Morris to take up another craft—the production of books. The manufacture of paper, the cutting of type, illumination and illustration, all

engaged his attention. He founded the Kelmscott Press in 1891. His finest achievement was his edition of Chaucer, perhaps one of the most beautiful books ever printed and a fitting tribute to his immortal Master.

There is a later phase of Morris's life still to be touched upon. In 1883 he avowed himself a Socialist. Morris seems to be a mass of contradictions : one would hardly have expected a man of his artistic instincts and aristocratic tastes to have become a convert to Socialism. Nor did he merely sympathise passively with its doctrines : he founded an association, addressed meetings up and down the country and harangued at street-corners like a professed politician. He wrote incessantly in aid of the cause, and to this period (1883-1896) belongs the series of prose romances of which the best known are the *Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere*, the latter a description of a socialistic Utopia.

In the midst of all this bewildering variety of activities, it is possible to discern in Morris one element which gives unity to his whole life and work—the passion for beauty. Beauty he strove after always, whether in a poem, a piece of furniture, a story, a stained-glass window, or in the organisation of society. This explains his love of the Middle Ages, when men felt a natural hunger after beauty, and unconsciously strove to satisfy it in their making of useful things, so stamping them with their own personality. It is not surprising that, with these ideals, Morris railed at modern Industrialism which had turned the pleasant English countryside into a 'smoky net' of dingy houses and factory chimneys, had degraded the craftsman till he became a mere cog in a vast inhuman machine, and in the pursuit of material welfare had lost sight of beauty altogether.

Four years of arduous, heart-breaking effort in the Socialist cause undermined his health, and he completely broke down in 1891. He survived to put the finishing touches to his beloved *Chaucer*, and died in 1896 at the age of sixty-two.

W. S. Gilbert in one of his lyrics draws an amusing and satirical picture of the Aesthete who used, two generations ago, to languish in society drawing-rooms or

' . . . walk down Piccadilly, with a poppy or a lily
In his mediæval hand.'

Morris, although the leader of what was virtually an Aesthetic Revival, was just the opposite type. There was no languishing about him. He thought nothing of devouring six eggs for breakfast. In his everyday clothes of blue serge, with a coarse flannel shirt open at the neck and a shapeless soft hat, he might have been taken for a ship's bos'n. He was a burly figure, and his voice was deep and resonant. His humour was boisterous, his temper violently explosive. Vehemence was stamped upon him and all that he did. He loved life and work and gave himself to both with the zest of a never-failing youthfulness.

TO CHAUCER

(From the beginning of Book XVII.)

Would that I

Had but some portion of that mastery
That from the rose-hung lanes of woody Kent
Through these five hundred years such songs **have sent**
To us, who, meshed within this smoky net
Of unrejoicing labour, love them yet.
And thou, O Master !—Yea, my Master still,
Whatever feet have scaled Parnassus' hill,
Since like thy measures, clear and sweet and strong,
Thames' stream scarce fettered drave the dace along
Unto the bastioned bridge, his only chain.—
O Master, pardon me, if yet in vain
Thou art my Master, and I fail to bring
Before men's eyes the image of the thing
My heart is filled with.

Then Jason with his spear-shaft carefully
Sounded the depth, nor any bottom found ;
And wisely he cast his eyes around 30
To see if help was nigh, and heard a voice
Behind him, calling out, ' Fair youth, rejoice
That I am here to help, or certainly
Long time a dweller hereby shouldst thou be.'

Then Jason turned round quickly, and beheld
A woman, bent with burdens and with eld,
Grey and broad shouldered ; so he laughed, and said :
' O mother, wilt thou help me ? by my head,
More help than thine I need upon this day.'
' O son,' she said, ' needs must thou on thy way ; 40
And is there any of the giants here
To bear thee through this water without fear ?
Take, then, the help a God has sent to thee,
For in mine arms a small thing shalt thou be.'

So Jason laughed no more, because a frown
Gathered upon her brow, as she cast down
Her burden to the earth, and came a-nigh,
And raised him in her long arms easily,
And stept adown into the water cold.

There with one arm the hero did she hold, 50
And with the other thrust the whirling trees
Away from them ; and laughing, and with ease
Went through the yellow foaming stream, and came
Unto the other bank ; and little shame
Had Jason that a woman carried him,
For no man, howsoever strong of limb,
Had dared across that swollen stream to go,
But if he wished the Stygian stream to know ;
Therefore he doubted not, that with some God
Or reverend Goddess that rough way he trod. 60

So when she had clomb up the slippery bank,
And let him go, well-nigh adown he sank,
For he was dizzy with the washing stream,

And with that passage mazed as with a dream.

But, turning round about unto the crone,
He saw not her, but a most glorious one,
A lady clad in blue, all glistening
With something more than gold, crowned like the king
Of all the world, and holding in her hand
A jewelled rod. So when he saw her stand 70
With unsoiled feet scarce touching the wet way,
He trembled sore, but therewith heard her say :—

‘ O Jason, such as I have been to thee
Upon this day, such ever will I be ;
And I am Juno ; therefore doubt thou not
A mighty helper henceforth thou hast got
Against the swords and bitter tongues of men,
For surely mayst thou lean upon me, when
The turbulent and little-reasoning throng
Press hard upon thee, or a king with wrong 80
Would fain undo thee, as thou leanedst now
Within the yellow stream : so from no blow
Hold back thine hand, nor fear to set thine heart
On what thou deemest fits thy kingly part.

‘ Now to the king’s throne this day draw anear,
Because of old time have I set a fear
Within his heart, ere yet thou hadst gained speech,
And whilst thou wanderedst beneath oak and beech
Unthinking. And, behold ! so have I wrought,
That with thy coming shall a sign be brought 90
Unto him ; for the latchet of thy shoe
Rushing Anaurus late I bade undo,
Which now is carried swiftly to the sea.

‘ So Pelias, this day setting eyes on thee,
Shall not forget the shameful trickling blood
Adown my altar-steps, or in my wood
The screaming peacocks scared by other screams,
Nor yet to-night shall he dream happy dreams.

‘ Farewell then, and be joyful, for I go

¶ Unto the people, many a thing to show, 100
And set them longing for forgotten things,
Whose rash hands toss about the crowns of kings.'

Therewith before his eyes a cloud there came,
Sweet-smelling, coloured like a rosy flame,
That wrapt the Goddess from him ; who, indeed,
Went to Iolchos, and there sowed the seed
Of bitter change, that ruins kings of men ;
For, like an elder of threescore and ten,
Throughout the town she went, and, as such do,
Ever she blessed the old, and banned the new ; 110
Lamenting for the passed and happy reign
Of Cretheus, wishing there were come again
One like to him ; till in the market-place
About the king was many a doubtful face.

Now Jason, by Anaurus left alone,
Found that, indeed, his right-foot shoe was gone,
But, as the Goddess bade him, went his way
Half shod, and by an hour before mid-day
He reached the city gates, and entered there,
Whom the folk mocked, beholding his foot bare, 120
And iron-hilted sword, and uncouth weed :
But of no man did he take any heed,
But came into the market-place, where thronged
Much folk about him who his sire had wronged.
But when he stood within that busy stead,
Taller he showed than any by a head,
Great limbed, broad shouldered, mightier than all,
But soft of speech, though unto him did fall
Full many a scorn upon that day to get.

So in a while he came where there was set 130
Pelias, the king, judging the people there ;
In scarlet was he clad, and o'er his hair,
Sprinkled with grey, he wore a royal crown,
And from an ivory throne he looked adown
Upon the suitors and the restless folk.

Now, when the yellow head of Jason broke
From out the throng, with fearless eyes and grey,
A terror took the king, that ere that day
For many a peaceful year he had not felt,
And his hand fell upon his swordless belt ; 140
But when the hero strode up to the throne,
And set his unshod foot upon the stone
Of the last step thereof, and as he stood,
Drew off the last fold of his russet hood,
And with a clang let fall his brass-bound spear,
The king shrunk back, grown pale with deadly fear ;
Nor then the oak-trees' speech did he forget,
Noting the one bare foot, and garments wet,
And something half remembered in his face.

And now nigh silent was the crowded place, 150
For through the folk remembrance Juno sent,
And soon from man to man a murmur went,
And frowning folk were whispering deeds of shame
And wrong the king had wrought, and Æson's name,
Forgotten long, was bandied all about,
And silent mouths seemed ready for a shout.

So, when the king raised up a hand, that shook
With fear, and turned a wrathful, timorous look
On his Ætolian guards, upon his ears
There fell the clashing of the people's spears ; 160
And on the house-tops round about the square
Could he behold folk gathered here and there,
And see the sunbeams strike on brass and steel.
But therewithal, though new fear did he feel,
He thought, ' Small use of arms in this distress,—
Needs is it that I use my wiliness ; '
Then spoke aloud : ' O man, what wouldst thou here,
That bearest thus a king with little fear ? '

' Pelias,' he said, ' I will not call thee king,
Because thy crown is but a stolen thing, 170
And with a stolen sceptre dost thou reign,

Which now I bid thee render up again,
And on his father's throne my father set,
Whom for long years the Gods did well forget,
But now, in lapse of time, remembering,
Have raised me, Jason, up to do this thing,
His son, and son of fair Alcimidé ;
Yet now, since Tyro's blood 'twixt thee and me
Still runs, and thou my father's brother art,
In no wise would I hurt thee, for my part, 180
If thou wilt render to us but our own.
And still shalt thou stand nigh my father's throne.'

Then all the people, when aright they knew,
That this was Æson's son, about them drew,
And when he ended gave a mighty shout ;
But Pelias cleared his face of fear and doubt,
And answered Jason, smiling cunningly :—

‘ Yea, in good time thou comest unto me,
My nephew Jason ; fain would I lay down
This heavy weight and burden of a crown, 190
And have instead my brother's love again,
I lost, to win a troublous thing and vain ;
And yet, since now thou showest me such goodwill,
Fain would I be a king a short while still.
That everything in order I may set,
Nor any man thereby may trouble get.
And now I bid thee stand by me to-day,
And cast all fear and troublous thoughts away ;
And for thy father Æson will I send,
That I may see him as a much-loved friend, 200
Now that these years of bitterness are passed,
And peaceful days are come to me at last.’

With that, from out the press grave Æson came
E'en as he spoke ; for to his ears the fame
Of Jason's coming thither had been brought ;
Wherefore, with eager eyes his son he sought ;
But, seeing the mighty hero great of limb,

Stopped short, with eyes set wistfully on him,
While a false honied speech the king began :

‘ Hail, brother Æson, hail, O happy man ! 210

To-day thou winnest back a noble son,
Whose glorious deeds this fair hour sees begun,
And from my hands thou winnest back the crown
Of this revered and many-peopled town ;
So let me win from thee again thy love,
Nor with long anger slight the Gods above.’

Then Jason, holding forth the horn and ring,
Said to his father, ‘ Doubtest thou this thing ?
Behold the tokens Chiron gave to me
When first he said that I was sprung from thee.’ 220

Then little of those signs did Æson reckon,
But cast his arms about the hero’s neck,
And kissed him oft, remembering well the time
When as he sat beneath the flowering lime
Beside his house, the glad folk to him came
And said : ‘ O King, all honour to thy name
That will not perish surely, for thy son
His royal life this day has just begun.’

Pelias gave a feast in Jason’s honour that night, and recounted how their kinsman Phryxus was by a miracle borne away to far Colchis on the back of the Golden-fleeced Ram and was treacherously slain by Æetes, the Colchian king. He challenged Jason to avenge the foul deed, give Phryxus’ bones a Grecian burial and recover the Golden Fleece—a cunning wile to rid him of the rightful claimant to his throne. Jason accepted the challenge and bade Pelias send heralds throughout Hellas to announce the quest and to invite lovers of adventure to join in it. (Book II, 229-end.)

III. THE QUEST BEGINS

Now the next morn, when risen was the sun,
Men 'gan to busk them for the quest begun ;
Nor long delay made Pelias, being in fear
Lest aught should stay them ; so his folk did bear
News of these things throughout the towns of Greece,
Moving great men to seek the golden fleece.

Therefore, from many a lordship forth they rode,
Leaving both wife and child and loved abode,
And many a town must now be masterless,
And women's voices rule both more and less, 10
And women's hands be dreaded, far and wide,
This fair beginning of the summer-tide.

First came Argus, a cunning wood-craftsman, who built the good ship Argo to carry the heroes on their quest. The prow he fashioned from a pillar in the royal hall once cut from the magic speaking oak of Dodona. Next came Polyphemus, Erginus the son of Neptune, Theseus, Atalanta the swift huntress, Tiphys the pilot, Hercules with his young companions Hylas and Ephebus, the twins Castor and Pollux, the keen-eyed Lynceus, Zetes and Calais the North Wind's sons, Asclepius the healer, and many others. Last of all came Orpheus, unrivalled for the sweetness of his song. Jason assembled the goodly company and thus addressed them : (Book III, 13-531).

' Fair friends and well-loved guests, no more shall ye
Feast in this hall until we come again
Back to this land, well-guerdoned for our pain,
Bearing the fleece, and mayhap many a thing
Such as this god-like guest erewhile did sing,
Scarlet, and gold, and brass ; but without fail
Bearing great fame, if aught that may avail

To men who die ; and our names certainly 20
Shall never perish, whereso'er we lie.

‘ And now behold within the haven rides
Our good ship, swinging in the changing tides,
Gleaming with gold, and blue, and cinnabar,
The long new oars beside the rowlocks are,
The sail hangs flapping in the light west wind,
Nor aught undone can any craftsman find
From stem to stern : so is our quest begun
To-morrow at the rising of the sun.
And may Jove bring us all safe back to see
Another sun shine on this fair city,
When elders and the flower-crowned maidens meet
With tears and singing our returning feet.’

So spake he, and so mighty was the shout,
That the hall shook, and shepherd-folk without
The well-walled city heard it as they went
Unto the fold across the thymy bent.

But through the town few eyes were sealed by sleep
When the sun rose : yea, and the upland sheep
Must guard themselves for that one morn at least, 40
Against the wolf ; and wary doves may feast
Unscared that morning on the ripening corn.
Nor did the whetstone touch the scythe that morn ;
And all unheeded did the mackerel shoal
Make green the blue waves, or the porpoise roll
Through changing hills and valleys of the sea.

For 'twixt the thronging people solemnly
The heroes went afoot along the way
That led unto the haven of the bay,
And as they went the roses rained on them
From windows glorious with the well-wrought hem
Of many a purple cloth ; and all their spears
Were twined with flowers that the fair earth bears ;

And round their ladies' tokens were there set
About their helmets, flowery wreaths, still wet
With beaded dew of the scarce vanished night.

So as they passed, the young men at the sight
Shouted for joy, and their hearts swelled with pride ;
But scarce the elders could behold dry-eyed
The glorious show, remembering well the days 60
When they were able too to win them praise,
And in their hearts was hope of days to come.

Nor could the heroes leave their fathers' home
Unwept of damsels, who henceforth must hold
The empty air unto their bosoms cold,
And make their sweet complainings to the night
That heedeth not soft eyes and bosoms white.
And many such an one was there that morn,
Who, with lips parted and grey eyes forlorn,
Stood by the window and forgot to cast 70
Her gathered flowers as the heroes passed,
But held them still within her garment's hem,
Though many a wingèd wish she sent to them.

But on they went, and as the way they trod,
His swelling heart nigh made each man a god ;
While clashed their armour to the minstrelsy
That went before them to the doubtful sea.

And now, the streets being passed, they reached the bay,
Where by the well-built quay long Argo lay,
Glorious with gold, and shining in the sun. 80
Then first they shouted, and each man begun
Against his shield to strike his brazen spear ;
And as along the quays they drew a-near,
Faster they strode and faster, till a cry
Again burst from them, and right eagerly
Into swift running did they break at last,
Till all the wind-swept quay being overpast,
They pressed across the gangway, and filled up
The hollow ship as wine a golden cup.

But Jason, standing by the helmsman's side 90
High on the poop, lift up his voice and cried :—

‘ Look landward, heroes, once, before ye slip
The tough well-twisted hawser from the ship,
And set your eager hands to rope or oar ;
For now, behold, the king stands on the shore
Beside a new-built altar, while the priests
Lead up a hecatomb of spotless beasts,
White bulls and coal-black horses, and my sire
Lifts up the barley-cake above the fire ;
And in his hand a cup of ruddy gold 100
King Pelias takes ; and now may ye behold
The broad new-risen sun light up the God,
Who, holding in his hand the crystal rod
That rules the sea, stands by Dædalian art
Above his temple, set right far apart
From other houses, nigh the deep green sea.

‘ And now, O fellows, from no man but me
These gifts come to the God, that, ere long years
Have drowned our laughter and dried up our tears,
We may behold that glimmering brazen God 110
Against the sun bear up his crystal rod
Once more, and once more cast upon this land
This cable, severed by my bloodless brand.’

So spake he, and raised up the glittering steel,
That fell, and seaward straight did Argo reel,
Set free, and smitten by the western breeze,
And raised herself against the ridgy seas,
With golden eyes turned toward the Colchian land,
Still heedful of wise Tiphys' skilful hand.

But silent sat the heroes by the oar, 120
Harkening the sounds borne from the lessening shore ;
The lowing of the doomed and flower-crowned beasts,
The plaintive singing of the ancient priests,
Mingled with blare of trumpets, and the sound

Of all the many folk that stood around
The altar and the temple by the sea.
So sat they pondering much and silently,
Till all the landward noises died away,
And, midmost now of the green sunny bay,
They heard no sound but washing of the seas 130
And piping of the following western breeze,
And heavy measured beating of the oars :
So left the Argo the Thessalian shores.

Now Neptune, joyful of the sacrifice
Beside the sea, and all the gifts of price
That Jason gave him, sent them wind at will,
And swiftly Argo climbed each changing hill,
And ran through rippling valleys of the sea ;
Nor toiled the heroes unmelodiously,
For by the mast sat great Cæger's son, 140
And through the harp-strings let his fingers run
Nigh soundless, and with closed lips for a while ;
But soon across his face there came a smile,
And his glad voice brake into such a song
That swiftness sped the eager ship along.

‘ O bitter sea, tumultuous sea,
Full many an ill is wrought by thee !—
Unto the wasters of the land
Thou holdest out thy wrinkled hand ;
And when they leave the conquered town, 150
Whose black smoke makes thy surges brown,
Driven betwixt thee and the sun,
As the long day of blood is done,
From many a league of glittering waves
Thou smilest on them and their slaves.

‘ The thin bright-eyed Phœnician
Thou drawest to thy waters wan.
With ruddy eve and golden morn

Thou temptest him, until, forlorn,
Unburied, under alien skies 160
Cast up ashore his body lies.

‘ Yea, whoso sees thee from his door,
Must ever long for more and more ;
Nor will the beechen bowl suffice,
Or homespun robe of little price,
Or hood well-woven of the fleece
Undyed, or unspiced wine of Greece ;
So sore his heart is set upon
Purple, and gold, and cinnamon ;
For as thou cravest, so he craves, 170
Until he rolls beneath thy waves,
Nor in some landlocked, unknown bay,
Can satiate thee for one day.

‘ Now, therefore, O thou bitter sea,
With no long words we pray to thee,
But ask thee, hast thou felt before
Such strokes of the long ashen oar ?
And hast thou yet seen such a prow
Thy rich and niggard waters plough ?

‘ Nor yet, O sea, shalt thou be cursed, 180
If at thy hands we gain the worst,
And, wrapt in water, roll about,
Blind-eyed, unheeding song or shout,
Within thine eddies far from shore,
Warmed by no sunlight any more.

‘ Therefore, indeed, we joy in thee,
And praise thy greatness, and will we
Take at thy hands both good and ill,
Yea, what thou wilt, and praise thee still,
Enduring not to sit at home, 190
And wait until the last days come,
When we no more may care to hold
White bosoms under crowns of gold,

And our dulled hearts no longer are
Stirred by the clangorous noise of war,
And hope within our souls is dead,
And no joy is remembered.

‘ So, if thou hast a mind to slay,
Fair prize thou hast of us to-day ;
And if thou hast a mind to save, 200
Great praise and honour shalt thou have ;
But whatso thou wilt do with us,
Our end shall not be piteous,
Because our memories shall live
When folk forget the way to drive
The black keel through the heaped-up sea,
And half dried up thy waters be.’

IV. THE LOSS OF HYLAS

They skirted the isle of Lemnos : there the women-folk
had put all the males to the sword, save one who took to the
sea for refuge and was taken aboard by the Argonauts.
(Book IV, 171-359.)

Meanwhile, along the high cliffs Argo ran
Until a fresh land-wind began to rise,
Then did they set sail, and in goodly wise
Draw off from Lemnos, and at close of day
Again before them a new country lay,
Which when they neared, the helmsman Tiphys knew
To be the Mysian land ; being come thereto,
They saw a grassy shore and trees enow,
And a sweet stream that from the land did flow ;
Therefore they thought it good to land thereon 10
And get them water ; but, the day being gone,
They anchored till the dawn anigh the beach,
Till the sea’s rim the golden sun did reach.

But when the day dawned, most men left the ship,
Some hasting the glazed water-jars to dip
In the fresh water ; others among these
Who had good will beneath the murmuring trees
To sit awhile, forgetful of the sea.
And with the sea-farers there landed three
Amongst the best, Alcmena's godlike son, 20
Hylas the fair, and that half-halting one,
Great Polyphemus. Now both Hercules
And all the others lay beneath the trees,
When all the jars were filled, nor wandered far ;
But Hylas, governed by some wayward star,
Strayed from them, and up stream he set his face.
And came unto a tangled woody place,
From whence the stream came, and within that wood
Along its bank wandered in heedless mood,
Nor knew it haunted of the sea-nymphs fair, 30
Whom on that morn the heroes' noise did scare
From their abiding-place anigh the bay ;
But these now hidden in the water lay
Within the wood, and thence could they behold
The fair-limbed Hylas, with his hair of gold,
And mighty arms down-swinging carelessly,
And fresh face, ruddy from the wind-swept sea ;
Then straight they loved him, and, being fain to have
His shapely body in the glassy wave,
And taking counsel there, they thought it good 40
That one should meet him in the darksome wood,
And by her wiles should draw him to some place
Where they his helpless body might embrace.

So from the water stole a fair nymph forth,
And by her art so wrought, that from the north
You would have thought her come, from where a queen
Rules over lands summer alone sees green ;
For she in goodly raiment, furred, was clad,
And on her head a golden fillet had,

Strange of its fashion, and about her shone
Many a fair jewel and outlandish stone. 50

So in the wood, anigh the river side,
The coming of the Theban did she bide,
Nor waited long, for slowly pushing through
The close-set saplings, o'er the flowers blue
He drew nigh, singing, free from any care ;
But when he saw her glittering raiment fair
Betwixt the green tree-trunks, he stayed a space,
For she, with fair hands covering up her face,
Was wailing loud, as though she saw him not, 60
And to his mind came old tales half forgot,
Of women of the woods, the huntsman's bane.

Yet with his fate indeed he strove in vain ;
For, going further forward warily,
From tree-trunk unto tree-trunk, he could see
Her ivory hands, with wrist set close to wrist,
Her cheek as fair as any God has kissed,
Her lovely neck and wealth of golden hair,
That from its fillet straggled here and there,
And all her body writhing in distress, 70
Wrapped in the bright folds of her golden dress.

Then forthwith he drew near her eagerly,
Nor did she seem to know that he was nigh,
Until almost his hand on her was laid ;
Then, lifting up a pale wild face, she said,
Struggling with sobs and shrinking from his hand :—
' O, fair young warrior of a happy land,
Harm not a queen, I pray thee, for I come
From the far northland, where yet sits at home
The king, my father, who, since I was wooed 80
By a rich lord of Greece, had thought it good
To send me to him with a royal train.
But they, their hearts being changed by hope of gain,
Seized on my goods, and left me while I slept ;
Nor do I know, indeed, what kind God kept

Their traitorous hands from slaying me outright ;
And surely yet, the lion-haunted night
Shall make an end of me, who erewhile thought
That unto lovelier lands I was being brought,
To live a happier life than heretofore.

90

‘ But why think I of past times any more,
Who, a king’s daughter once, am now grown fain
Of poorest living, through all toil and pain,
If so I may but live : and thou, indeed,
Perchance art come, some God, unto my need ;
For nothing less thou seemest, verily.
But if thou art a man, let me not die,
But take me as thy slave, that I may live.
For many a gem my raiment has to give,
And these weak fingers surely yet may learn
To turn the mill, and carry forth the urn
Unto the stream, nor shall my feet unshod,
Shrink from the flinty road and thistly sod.’

100

She ceased ; but he stooped down, and stammering said :
‘ Mayst thou be happy, O most lovely maid,
And thy sweet life yet know a better day :
And I will strive to bring thee on thy way,
Who am the well-loved son of a rich man
Who dwells in Thebes, beside Ismenus wan.’
Therewith he reached his hand to her, and she
Let her slim palm fall in it daintily ;
But with that touch he felt as through his blood
Strange fire ran, and saw not the close wood,
Nor tangled path, nor stream, nor aught but her
Crouching before him in her gold and fur,
With kind appealing eyes raised up to his,
And red lips trembling for the coming kiss.

110

But ere his lips met hers did she arise,
Reddening with shame, and from before his eyes
Drew her white hand, wherewith the robe of gold
She gathered up, and from her feet did hold,

120

Then through the tangled wood began to go,
Not looking round ; but he cared not to know
Whither they went, so only she was nigh.
So to her side he hurried fearfully,
She naught gainsaying, but with eyes downcast
Still by his side betwixt the low boughs past,
Following the stream, until a space of green
All bare of trees they reached, and there-between
The river ran, grown broad and like a pool, 130
Along whose bank a flickering shade and cool
Grey willows made, and all about they heard
The warble of the small brown river bird.
And from both stream and banks rose up a haze
Quivering and glassy, for of summer days
This was the chiefest day and crown of all.

There did the damsel let her long skirts fall
Over her feet, but as her hand dropped down,
She felt it stopped by Hylas' fingers brown,
Whereat she trembled and began to go 140
Across the flowery grass with footsteps slow,
As though she grew aweary, and she said,
Turning about her fair and glorious head :
' Soft is the air in your land certainly,
But under foot the way is rough and dry
Unto such feet as mine, more used to feel
The dainty stirrup wrought of gold and steel,
Or tread upon the white bear's fell, or pass
In spring and summer o'er such flowery grass
As this, that soothly mindeth me too much 150
Of that my worshipped feet were wont to touch,
When I was called a queen ; let us not haste
To leave this sweet place for the tangled waste,
I pray thee, therefore, prince, but let us lie
Beneath these willows while the wind goes by,
And set our hearts to think of happy things,
Before the morrow pain and trouble brings.'

She faltered somewhat as she spoke, but he
Drew up before her and took lovingly
Her other hand, nor spoke she more to him, 160
Nor he to her awhile, till, from the rim
Of his great shield, broke off the leathern band
That crossed his breast, whether some demon's hand
Snapped it unseen, or some sharp, rugged bough
Within the wood had chafed it even now ;
But clattering fell the buckler to the ground,
And, startled at the noise, he turned him round,
Then, grown all bold within that little space,
He set his cheek unto her blushing face,
And smiling, in a low voice said :

‘ O sweet, 170
Call it an omen that this, nowise meet
For deeds of love, has left me by its will,
And now by mine these toys that cumber still
My arms shall leave me.’

And therewith he threw
His brass-bound spear upon the grass, and drew
The Theban blade from out its ivory sheath,
And loosed his broad belt's clasp, that like a wreath
His father's Indian serving-man had wrought,
And cast his steel coat off, from Persia brought ;
And so at last being freed of brass and steel, 180
Upon his breast he laid her hand to feel
The softness of the fine Phœnician stuff
That clad it still, nor yet could toy enough
With that fair hand ; so played they for a space,
Till softly did she draw him to a place
Anigh the stream, and they being set, he said :

‘ And what dost thou, O love ? art thou afraid
To cast thine armour off, as I have done,
Within this covert where the fiery sun
Scarce strikes upon one jewel of your gown ? ’ 190

Then she spake, reddening, with her eyes cast down :

‘ O prince, behold me as I am to-day,
But if o’er many a rough and weary way
It hap unto us both at last to come
Unto the happy place that is thine home,
Then let me be as women of thy land
When they before the sea-born goddess stand,
And not one flower hides them from her sight.’

But with that word she set her fingers white
Upon her belt, and he said amorously : 200
‘ Ah, God, whatso thou wilt must surely be,
But would that I might die or be asleep
Till we have gone across the barren deep,
And you and I together, hand in hand,
Some day ere sunrise lights the quiet land,
Behold once more the seven gleaming gates.’

‘ O love,’ she said, ‘ and such a fair time waits
Both thee and me ; but now to give thee rest,
Here, in the noontide, were it not the best
To soothe thee with some gentle murmuring song, 210
Sung to such notes as to our folk belong ;
Such as my maids awhile ago would sing
When on my bed a-nights I lay waking ? ’
‘ Sing on,’ he said, ‘ but let me dream of bliss
If I should sleep, nor yet forget thy kiss.’
She touched his lips with hers, and then began
A sweet song sung not yet to any man.

‘ I know a little garden close
Set thick with lily and red rose,
Where I would wander if I might 220
From dewy dawn to dewy night,
And have one with me wandering.

‘ And though within it no birds sing,
And though no pillared house is there,
And though the apple boughs are bare
Of fruit and blossom, would to God,

Her feet upon the green grass trod,
And I beheld them as before.

‘ There comes a murmur from the shore,
And in the place two fair streams are, 230
Drawn from the purple hills afar,
Drawn down unto the restless sea ;
The hills whose flowers ne’er fed the bee,
The shore no ship has ever seen,
Still beaten by the billows green,
Whose murmur comes unceasingly
Unto the place for which I cry.

‘ For which I cry both day and night,
For which I let slip all delight,
That maketh me both deaf and blind, 240
Careless to win, unskilled to find,
And quick to lose what all men seek.

‘ Yet tottering as I am, and weak,
Still have I left a little breath
To seek within the jaws of death
An entrance to that happy place,
To seek the unforgotten face
Once seen, once kissed, once reft from me
Anigh the murmuring of the sea.’

She ceased her song, that lower for a while 250
And slower too had grown, and a soft smile
Grew up within her eyes as still she sung.
Then she rose up and over Hylas hung,
For now he slept ; wherewith the God in her
Consumed the northern robe done round with fur
That hid her beauty, and the light west wind
Played with her hair no fillet now did bind,
And through her faint grey garment her limbs seemed
Like ivory in the sea, and the sun gleamed
In the strange jewels round her middle sweet, 260
And in the jewelled sandals on her feet.

So stood she murmuring till a rippling sound
She heard, that grew until she turned her round
And saw her other sisters of the deep
Her song had called while Hylas yet did sleep,
Come swimming in a long line up the stream,
And their white dripping arms and shoulders gleam
Above the dark grey water as they went,
And still before them a great ripple sent.

But when they saw her, toward the bank they drew, 270
And landing, felt the grass and flowers blue
Against their unused feet ; then in a ring
Stood gazing with wide eyes, and wondering
At all his beauty they desired so much.
And then with gentle hands began to touch
His hair, his hands, his closed eyes ; and at last
Their eager naked arms about him cast,
And bore him, sleeping still, as by some spell,
Unto the depths where they were wont to dwell ;
Then softly down the reedy bank they slid, 280
And with small noise the gurgling river hid
The flushed nymphs and the heedless sleeping man.

But ere the water covered them, one ran
Across the mead and caught up from the ground
The brass-bound spear, and buckler bossed and round,
The ivory-hilted sword, and coat of mail,
Then took the stream ; so what might tell the tale,
Unless the wind should tell it, or the bird
Who from the reed these things had seen and heard ?

Polyphemus and Hercules went in search of Hylas and did not come back. Meantime, their comrades had weighed anchor, and, a gale having sprung up, were hard put to it to keep the Argo's head to wind. Then from the magic beam in the prow shone forth a light, and a voice warned the heroes not to wait, for the gods had other work for Hercules and Polyphemus to do. The storm ceased, and they were borne

along towards the straits by a favouring wind. (Book IV, 649-end.)

V. PHINEUS AND THE HARPIES

They pass through the Hellespont in safety and land at Cyzicum, whose king, Cyzicus, received them hospitably, and on the morn sent them away laden with gifts. At dusk the breeze failed, and for a time they lay becalmed. Presently, as the night grew dark, a gale arose and drove them, blind and helpless, back upon their course. When the wind died, having anchored in some shallow bay, they were espied by watchers on the shore, who took them for pirates and raised the alarm. The Argonauts, leaping overboard, closed with their unseen foes, and Jason slew their leader with his own hand. The rest took to the woods. When day dawned the heroes knew the place as Cyzicum, and to their grief found they had slain the king at whose hands they had fared so well. Straightway they built a funeral pyre, and burned his body with due rites, and set his ashes in a golden urn to carry back to Greece, where Jason vowed he would raise a temple to his memory. (Book V, 1-128.)

Now eastward with a fair wind as they went,
And towards the opening of the ill sea bent
Their daring course, Tiphys arose and said :

‘ Heroes, it seems to me that hardihead
Helps mortal men but little, if thereto
They join not wisdom ; now needs must we go
Into the evil sea through blue rocks twain,
No keel hath ever passed, although in vain
Some rash men trying it of old, have been
Pounded therein, as poisonous herbs and green
Are pounded by some witch-wife on the shore
Of Pontus,—for these two rocks evermore

Each against each are driven, and leave not
Across the whole strait such a little spot
Safe from the grinding of their mighty blows,
As that through which a well-aimed arrow goes
When archers for a match shoot at the ring.

‘ Now, heroes, do I mind me of a king
That dwelleth at a sea-side town of Thrace
That men call Salmydessa, from this place 20
A short day’s sail, who hidden things can tell
Beyond all men ; wherefore, I think it well
That we for counsel should now turn thereto,
Nor headlong to our own destruction go.’

Then all men said that these his words were good,
And turning, towards the Thracian coast they stood,
Which yet they reached not till the moonlit night
Was come, and from the shore the wind blew light ;
Then they lay to until the dawn, and then 30
Creeping along, found an abode of men
That Tiphys knew to be the place they sought.
Thereat they shouted, and right quickly brought
Fair Argo to the landing-place, and threw
Grapnels ashore, and landing forthwith drew
Unto the town, seeking Phineus the king.
But those they met and asked about this thing
Grew pale at naming him, and few words said ;
Natheless, they being unto the palace led,
And their names told, soon were they bidden in
To where the king sat, a man blind and thin, 40
And haggard beyond measure, who straightway
Called out aloud : ‘ Now blessed be the way
That led thee to me, happiest of all
Who from the poop see the prow rise and fall
And the sail bellying, and the glittering oars ;
And blessed be the day whereon our shores
First felt thy footsteps, since across the sea
My hope and my revenge thou bring’st with thee.’

Then Jason said : ' Hail. Phineus, that men call
Wisest of men, and may all good befall 50
To thee and thine, and happy mayst thou live ;
Yet do we rather pray thee gifts to give,
Than bring thee any gifts, for, soothly, we
Sail, desperate men and poor, across the sea.'

Then answered Phineus : ' Guest, I know indeed
What gift it is that on this day ye need,
Which I will not withhold ; and yet, I pray,
That ye will eat and drink with me to-day,
Then shall ye see how wise a man am I,
And how well-skilled to 'scape from misery.' 60

Therewith he groaned, and bade his folk to bring
Such feast as 'longed unto a mighty king,
And spread the board therewith ; who straight obeyed,
Trembling and pale, and on the tables laid
A royal feast most glorious in show.

Then said the king : ' I give you now to know
That the Gods love me not, O guests ; therefore,
Lest your expected feast be troubled sore,
Eat by yourselves alone. while I sit here
Looking for that which scarcely brings me fear 70
This day, since I so long have suffered it.'

So, wondering at his words, they all did sit
At that rich board, and ate and drank their fill ;
But yet with little mirth indeed, for still
Within their wondering ears the king's words rang,
And his blind eyes, made restless by some pang,
They still felt on them, though no word he said.

At last he called out : ' Though ye be full fed,
Sit still at table and behold me eat ;
Then shall ye witness with what royal meat 80
The Gods are pleased to feed me, since I know
As much as they do both of things below
And things above.'

Then, hearkening to this word,

The most of them grew doubtful and afeard
Of what should come ; but now unto the board
The king was led, and nigh his hand his sword,
Two-edged and ivory-hilted, did they lay,
And set the richest dish of all that day
Before him, and a wine-crowned golden cup,
And a pale, trembling servant lifted up 90
The cover from the dish ; then did they hear
A wondrous rattling sound that drew anear,
Increasing quickly : then the gilded hall
Grew dark at noon, as though the night did fall,
And open were all doors and windows burst,
And such dim light gleamed out as lights the cursed
Unto the torments behind Minos' throne :
Dim, green, and doubtful through the hall it shone,
Lighting up shapes no man had seen, before
They fell, awhile ago, upon that shore. 100

For now, indeed, the trembling Minyæ
Beheld the daughters of the earth and sea,
The dreadful snatchers, who like women were
Down to the breast, with scanty coarse black hair
About their heads, and dim eyes ringed with red,
And bestial mouths set round with lips of lead,
But from their gnarled necks there began to spring
Half hair, half feathers, and a sweeping wing
Grew out instead of arm on either side,
And thick plumes underneath the breast did hide 110
The place where joined the fearful natures twain.
Grey-feathered were they else, with many a stain
Of blood thereon, and on birds' claws they went.

These through the hall unheard-of shrieking sent,
And rushed at Phineus, just as to his mouth
He raised the golden cup to quench his drouth,
And scattered the red wine, and buffeted
The wretched king, and one, perched on his head,
Laughed as the furies laugh, when kings come down

To lead new lives within the fiery town, 120
And said : ' O Phineus, thou art lucky now
The hidden things of heaven and hell to know ;
Eat, happy man, and drink.' Then did she draw
From off the dish a gobbet with her claw,
And held it nigh his mouth, the while he strove
To free his arm, that one hovering above,
Within her filthy vulture-claws clutched tight,
And cried out at him : ' Truly, in dark night
Thou sceest, Phineus, as the leopard doth.'

Then cried the third : ' Fool, who would fain have both
Delight and knowledge, therefore, with blind eyes 131
Clothe thee in purple, wrought with braveries,
And set the pink-veined marble 'neath thy throne ;
Then on its golden cushions sit alone,
Hearkening thy chain-galled slaves without singing
For joy, that they behold so many a thing.' .

Then shrieked the first one in a dreadful voice :—
' And I, O Phineus, bid thee to rejoice.
That 'midst thy knowledge still thou know'st not this—
Whose flesh the lips, wherewith thy lips I kiss, 140
This morn have fed on.' Then she laughed again,
And fawning on him, with her sisters twain
Spread her wide wings, and hid him from the sight,
And mixed his groans with screams of shrill delight.

Now trembling sat the scafarers, nor dared
To use the weapons from their sheaths half-bared,
Fearing the Gods, who there, before their eyes,
Had shown them with what shame and miseries
They visit impious men : yet from the board
There started two, with shield and ready sword, 150
The Northwind's offspring, since, upon that day,
Their father wrought within them in such way,
They had no fear : but now, when Phineus knew,
By his divine art, that the godlike two
Were armed to help him, then from 'twixt the wings

He cried aloud : ' O, heroes, more than kings,
Strike, and fear not, but set me free to-day,
That ye within your brazen chests may lay
The best of all my treasure-house doth hold,
Fair linen, scarlet cloth, and well-wrought gold.' 160

Then shrieked the snatchers, knowing certainly
That now the time had come when they must fly
From pleasant Salmydessa, casting off
The joys they had in shameful mock and scoff.
So gat they from the blind king, leaving him
Pale and forewearied in his every limb ;
And, flying through the roof, they set them down
Above the hall-doors, 'mid the timbers brown,
Chattering with fury. Then the fair dyed wings
Opened upon the shoulders of the kings, 170
And on their heels, and shouting, they uprose,
And poised themselves in air to meet their foes.

Then here and there those loathly things did fly
Before the brazen shields, and swords raised high,
But as they flew unlucky words they cried.

The first said : ' Hail, O folk who wander wide,
Seeking a foolish thing across the sea,
Not heeding in what case your houses be,
Where now perchance the rovers cast the brand
Up to the roof, and leading by the hand 180
The fair-limbed women with their fettered feet
Pass down the sands, their hollow ship to meet.'

' Fair hap to him who weds the sorceress,'
The second cried, ' and may the just Gods bless
The slayer of his kindred and his name.'

' Luck to the toilsome seeker after fame.'
The third one from the open hall-door cried,
' Fare ye well, Jason, still unsatisfied,
Still seeking for a better thing than best,
A fairer thing than fairest, without rest ; 190

Good speed, O traitor, who shall think to wed
Soft limbs and white, and find thy royal bed
Dripping with blood, and burning up with fire ;
Good hap to him who henceforth ne'er shall tire
In seeking good that ever flies his hand
Till he lies buried in an alien land ! '

So screamed the monstrous fowl, but now the twain
Sprung from the Northwind's loins to be their bane,
Drew nigh unto them ; then, with huddled wings,
Forth from the hall they gat, but evil things 200
In flying they gave forth with weakened voice,
Saying unto them : ' O ye men, rejoice,
Whose bodies worms shall feed on soon or late,
Blind slaves and foolish of unsparing fate,
Seeking for that which ye can never get,
Whilst life and death alike ye do forget
In needless strife, until on some sure day,
Death takes your scarcely tasted life away.'

Quivering their voices ceased as on they flew
Before the swift wings of the godlike two 210
Far over land and sea, until they were
Anigh the isles called Strophades, and there,
With tired wings, all voiceless did they light,
Trembling to see anigh the armour bright
The wind-born brothers bore, but as these drew
Their gleaming swords and towards the monsters flew,
From out the deep rose up a black-haired man,
Who, standing on the white-topped waves that ran
On towards the shore, cried : ' Heroes, turn again,
For on this islet shall ye land in vain, 220
But without sorrow leave the chase of these
Who henceforth 'mid the rocky Strophades
Shall dwell for ever, servants unto me,
Working my will ; therefore rejoice that ye
Win gifts and honour for your deed to-day.'

Then, even as he spoke, they saw but grey
White-headed waves rolling where he had stood,
Whereat they sheathed their swords, and through their blood
A tremor ran, for now they knew that he
Was Neptune, shaker of the earth and sea ; 230
Therefore they turned them back unto the hall
Where yet the others were, and ere nightfall
Came back to Salmydessa and the king,
And lighting down they told him of the thing.

Who, hearing them, straight lifted up his voice,
And 'midst the shouts cried : ' Heroes, now rejoice
With me who am delivered on this day
From that which took all hope and joy away ;
Therefore to feast again, until the sun
Another glad day for us has begun, 240
And then, indeed, if ye must try the sea,
With gifts and counsel shall ye go from me ;
Such as the Gods have given me to give ,
And happy lives and glorious may ye live.'

They fell to feasting and on the morn, ere they gat them
gone, received from Phineus a dove by whose flight they
should tell if it was fated for them to pass the Clashing Rocks
in safety. (Book V, 373-end, VI, 1-70.)

VI. THE PASSAGE OF THE SYMPLEGADES AND THE LANDING AT ÆA

Now from the port passed Argo, and the wind
Being fair for sailing, quickly left behind
Fair Salmydessa, the kind, gainful place ;
And so, with sail and oar, in no long space *
They reached the narrow ending of the sea,
Where the wind shifted, blowing gustily

From side to side, so that their flapping sail
But little in the turmoil could avail ;
And now at last did they begin to hear
The pounding of the rocks ; but nothing clear 10
They saw them ; for the steaming clouds of spray,
Cast by the meeting hammers every way,
Quite hid the polished bases from their sight ;
Unless perchance the eyes of Lynceus might
Just now and then behold the deep blue shine
Betwixt the scattering of the silver brine ;
But sometimes 'twixt the clouds the sun would pass
And show the high rocks glittering like glass,
Quivering, as far beneath the churned-up waves
Were ground together the strong arched caves, 20
Wherein none dwelt, no, not the giant's brood,
Who fed the green sea with his lustful blood,
Nor were sea-devils even nurtured there,
Nor dared the sea-worm use them for its lair.

And now the Minyæ, as they drew anear,
Had been at point to turn about for fear,
Each man beholding his pale fellow's face,
Whose speech was silenced in that dreadful place
By the increasing clamour of the sea
And adamantine rocks ; then verily 30
Was Juno good at need, who set strange fire
In Jason's heart, and measureless desire
To be the first of men, and made his voice
Clear as that herald's, whose sweet words rejoice
The Gods within the flowery fields of Heaven,
And gave his well-knit arm the strength of seven.
So then, above the crash and thundering,
The Minyæ heard his shrill, calm voice, crying :—
' Shall this be, then, an ending to our quest ?
And shall we find the worst, who sought the best ? 40
Far better had ye sat beside your wives,
And 'mid the wine-cups lingered out your lives,

Dreaming of noble deeds, though trying none,
Than as vain boasters, with your deed undone,
Come back to Greece, that men may sing of you.
Are ye all shameless ?—are there not a few
Who have slain fear, knowing the unmoved fates
Have meted out already what awaits
The coward and the brave ? Ho ! Lynceus ! stand
Upon the prow, and let slip from your hand 50
The wise king's bird ; and all ye note, the wind
Is steady now, and, blowing from behind,
Drives us on toward the clashers, and I hold
The helm myself ; therefore, lest we be rolled
Broadside against these horrors, take the oar,
And hang here, half a furlong from the shore,
Nor die of fear, until at least we know
If through these gates the Gods will let us go :
And if so be they will not, yet will we
Not empty-handed come to Thessaly, 60
But strike for Ææa through this unknown land,
Whose arms reach out to us on either hand.'

Then they for shame began to cast off fear,
And, handling well the oars, kept Argo near
The changing, little-lighted, spray-washed space
Whereunto Lynceus set his eager face,
And loosed the dove, who down the west wind flew ;
Then all the others lost her, dashing through
The clouds of spray, but Lynceus noted how
She reached the open space, just as a blow 70
Had spent itself, and still the hollow sound
Of the last clash was booming all around ;
And eagerly he noted how the dove
Stopped 'mazed, and hovered for a while above
The troubled sea, then stooping, darted through,
As the blue gleaming rocks together drew ;
Then scarce he breathed, until a joyous shout

He gave, as he beheld her passing out
Unscathed, above the surface of the sea,
While back again the rocks drew sluggishly. 80

Then back their poised oars whirled, and straight they
drave

Unto the opening of the spray-arched cave ;
But Jason's eyes alone, of all the crew,
Beheld the sunny sea and cloudless blue,
Still narrowing, but bright from rock to rock.

Now as they neared, came the next thundering shock,
That deafened all, and with an icy cloud
Hid man from man ; but Jason, shouting loud,
Still clutched the tiller ; and the oars, grasped tight
By mighty hands, drave on the ship forthright 90
Unto the rocks, until, with blinded eyes,
They blinked one moment at those mysteries
Unseen before, the next they felt the sun
Full on their backs, and knew their deed was done.

Then on their oars they lay, and Jason turned,
And o'er the rocks beheld how Iris burned
In fair and harmless many-coloured flame,
And he beheld the way by which they came
Wide open, changeless, of its spray-clouds cleared ;
And though in his bewildered ears he heard 100
The tumult yet, that all was stilled he knew,
While in and out the unused sea-fowl flew
Betwixt them, and the now subsiding sea
Lapped round about their dark feet quietly.

So, turning to the Minyæ, he cried :—
' See ye, O fellows, the gates opened wide,
And chained fast by the Gods, nor think to miss
The very end we seek, or well-earned bliss
When once again we feel our country's earth,
And 'twixt the tears of elders, and the mirth 110
Of young men grown to manhood since we left,

And longing eyes of girls, the fleece, once reft
From a king's son of Greece, we hang again
In Neptune's temple, nigh the murmuring main.'

Then all men, with their eyes now cleared of brine,
Beheld the many-coloured rainbow shine
Over the rocks, and saw it fade away,
And saw the opening cleared of sea and spray,
And saw the green sea lap about the feet
Of those blue hills, that never more should meet, 120
And saw the wondering sea-fowl fly about
Their much-changed tops ; then, with a mighty shout,
They rose rejoicing, and poured many a cup
Of red wine to the Gods, and hoisting up
The weather-beaten sail, with mirth and song,
Having good wind at will, they sped along.

Three days passed, and on the fourth they landed at
Heraclea, where King Lycus entertained them for many days
with feasting and hunting. There Tiphys died from the bite
of a snake and his place at the helm was taken by Erginus.

On the eighth day after they had left Heraclea, Lynceus
descried Colchis. There, where the Phasis ended its course,
stood Æea, their wished-for goal—a goodly city, built upon
an island and girt about with towered walls. They crossed
the river-bar, and as they drew nigh the harbour they saw
the wharves alive with a throng of warriors whose arms
glistened in the sunlight. (Book VI, 197-312.)

Now drawing quickly nigh the landing-place,
Little by little did they slack their pace,
Till half a bowshot from the shore they lay,
Then Jason shouted : ' What do ye to-day 130
All armed, O warriors ? and what town is this
That here by seeming ye have little bliss
Of quiet life, but, smothered up in steel,
Ye needs must meet each harmless merchant keel

That nears your haven, though perchance it bring
Good news, and many a much-desired thing
That ye may get good cheap ? and such are we,
But wayfarers upon the troublous sea,
Careful of that stored up within our hold,
Phoenician scarlet, spice, and Indian gold, 140
Deep dyeing-earths. and woad and cinnabar,
Wrought arms and vessels, and all things that are
Desired much by dwellers in all lands ;
Nor doubt us friends, although indeed our hands
Lack not for weapons, for the unfenced head,
Where we have been, soon rests among the dead.'

So spake he with a smiling face, nor hed ;
For he, indeed, was purposed to have tried
To win the fleece neither by war or stealth :
But by an open hand and heaps of wealth, 150
If so it might be, bear it back again,
Nor with a handful fight a host in vain.

But being now silent, at the last he saw
A stir among those folk, who 'gan to draw
Apart to right and left, leaving a man
Alone amidst them, unarmed, with a wan
And withered face, and black beard mixed with grey
That swept his girdle, who these words did say :—

' O seafarers, I give you now to know
That on this town oft falleth many a foe, 160
Therefore not lightly may folk take the land
With helm on head, and naked steel in hand ;
Now, since indeed ye folk are but a few,
We fear you not, yet fain would that we knew
Your names and countries, since within this town
Of Æa may a good man lay him down
And fear for nought, at least while I am king,
Æetes, born to heed full many a thing.'

Now Jason, hearing this desired name
He thought to hear, grown hungrier yet for fame, 170

With eager heart, and fair face flushed for pride,
Said : ' King Æetes, if not over wide
My name is known, that yet may come to be,
For I am Jason of the Minyæ,
And through great perils have I come from Greece.
And now, since this is Æea, and the fleece
Thou slayedst once a guest to get, hangs up
Within thine house, take many a golden cup,
And arms, and dyestuffs, cloth, and spice, and gold,
Yea, all the goods that lie within our hold ; 180
Which are not mean, for neither have we come
Leaving all things of price shut up at home,
Nor have we seen the faces of great kings
And left them giftless ; therefore take these things
And be our friend ; or, few folk as we are,
The Gods and we may bring thee bitter care.'

Then spake Æetes : ' Not for any word,
Or for the glitter of thy bloodless sword,
O youngling, will I give the fleece to thee,
Nor yet for gifts,—for what are such to me ? 190
Behold, if all thy folk joined hand to hand
They should not, striving, be enough to stand
And girdle round my bursting treasure-house ;
Yet, since of this thing thou art amorous,
And I love men, and hold the Gods in fear,
If thou and thine will land, then mayst thou hear
What great things thou must do to win the fleece ;
Then, if thou wilt not dare it, go in peace.
But come now, thou shalt hear it amidst wine
And lovely things, and songs well-nigh divine, 200
And all the feasts that thou hast shared erewhile
With other kings, to mine shall be but vile.
Lest thou shouldst name me, coming to thy land,
A poor guest-fearing man, of niggard hand.'

So spake he outwardly, but inly thought,
' Within two days this lading shall be brought

To lie amongst my treasures with the best,
While 'neath the earth these robbers lie at rest.'

But Jason said : ‘ King, if these things be such
As man may do, I shall not fear them much, 210
And at thy board will I feast merrily
To-night, if on the morrow I must die ;
And yet, beware of treason, since for nought
Such lives as ours by none are lightly bought.’

The heroes landed and passed along streets of goodly houses to Æetes' palace, the splendour of which filled them with wonderment. Here they sat down to a sumptuous feast. (Book VI, 401-end.)

VII. MEDEA

So long they sat, until at last the sun
Sank in the sea, and noisy day was done.
Then bade Æetes light the place, that they
Might turn grim-looking night into the day ;
Whereon, the scented torches being brought,
As men with shaded eyes the shadows sought,
Turning to Jason, spake the king these words :—

‘ Dost thou now wonder, guest, that with sharp swords
And mailèd breasts of men I fence myself,
Not as a pedlar guarding his poor pelf, 10
But as a God shutting the door of heaven ?
Behold ! O Prince, for threescore years and seven
Have I dwelt here in bliss, nor dare I give
The fleece to thee, lest I should cease to live ;
Nor dare I quite this treasure to withhold,
Lest to the Gods I seem grown over-bold ;
For many a cunning man I have, to tell
Divine foreshowings of the oracle,
And thus they warn me. Therefore shalt thou hear

What well may fill a hero's heart with fear ; 20
But not from my old lips ; that thou mayst have,
Whether thy life thou here wilt spill or save,
At least one joy before thou comest to die :—
Ho ye, bid in my lady presently ! ’

But Jason, wondering what should come of this,
With heart well steeled to suffer woe or bliss,
Sat waiting, while within the music ceased,
But from without a strain rose and increased,
Till shrill and clear it drew anigh the hall,
But silent at the entry did it fall ; 30
And through the place there was no other sound
But falling of light footsteps on the ground,
For at the door a band of maids was seen,
Who went up towards the dais, a lovely queen
Being in their midst, who, coming nigh the place
Where the king sat, passed at a gentle pace
Alone before the others to the board,
And said : ‘ Æetes, father, and good lord,
What is it thou wouldst have of me to-night ? ’

‘ O daughter,’ said Æetes, ‘ tell aright 40
Unto this king's son here, who is my guest,
What things he must accomplish, ere his quest
Is finished, who has come this day to seek
The golden fell brought hither by the Greek,
The son of Athamas, the unlucky king,
That he may know at last for what a thing
He left the meadowy land and peaceful stead.’

Then she to Jason turned her golden head,
And reaching out her lovely arm, took up
From off the board a rich fair-jewelled cup, 50
And said : ‘ O prince, these hard things must ye do :—
First, going to their stall, bring out the two
Great brazen bulls, the king my father feeds
On grass of Pontus and strange-nurtured seeds ;
Nor heed what they may do, but take the plough

That in their stall stands ever bright enow,
And on their gleaming necks cast thou the yoke,
And drive them as thou mayst, with cry and stroke,
Through the grey acre of the God of War.

‘ Then, when turned up the long straight furrows are, 60
Take thou the sack that holds the serpents’ teeth
Our fathers slew upon the sunless heath ;
There sow those evil seeds, and bide thou there
Till they send forth a strange crop, nothing fair,
Which garner thou, if thou canst ’scape from death.

‘ But if thereafter still thou drawest breath,
Then shalt thou have the seven keys of the shrine
Wherein the beast’s fair golden locks yet shine ;
But yet sing not the song of triumph then,
Or think thyself the luckiest of men ; 70
For just within the brazen temple-gates
The guardian of the fleece for ever waits,—
A fork-tongued dragon, charmed for evermore
To writhe and wallow on the precious floor,
Sleepless, upon whose skin no steel will bite.

‘ If then with such an one thou needs must fight,
Or knowest arts to tame him, do thy worst,
Nor, carrying off the prize, shalt thou be curst
By us or any God. But yet, think well 80
If these three things be not impossible
To any man ; and make a bloodless end
Of this thy quest, and as my father’s friend
Well gifted, in few days return in peace,
Lacking for nought, forgetful of the fleece.’

Therewith she made an end ; but while she spoke
Came Love unseen, and cast his golden yoke
About them both, and sweeter her voice grew,
And softer ever, as betwixt them flew,
With fluttering wings, the new-born, strong desire ;
And when her eyes met his grey eyes, on fire 90

With that that burned her, then with sweet new shame
Her fair face roddened, and there went and came
Delicious tremors through her. But he said :—

‘ A bitter song thou singest, royal maid,
Unto a sweet tune ; yet doubt not that I
To-morrow this so certain death will try ;
And dying, may perchance not pass unwept,
And with sweet memories may my name be kept,
That men call Jason of the Minyæ.’

Then said she, trembling : ‘ Take, then, this of me, 100
And drink in token that thy life is passed,
And that thy reckless hand the die has cast.’

Therewith she reached the cup to him, but he
Stretched out his hand, and took it joyfully,
As with the cup he touched her dainty hand,
Nor was she loth awhile with him to stand,
Forgetting all else in that homed pain.

At last she turned, and with head raised again
He drank, and swore for nought to leave that quest
Till he had reached the worst end or the best ; 110
And down the hall the clustering Minyæ
Shouted for joy his godlike face to see.
But she, departing, made no further sign
Of her desires, but, while with song and wine
They feasted till the fevered night was late,
Within her bower she sat, made blind by fate.

But, when all hushed and still the palace grew,
She put her gold robes off, and on her drew
A dusky gown, and with a wallet small
And cutting wood-knife girt herself withal, 120
And from her dainty chamber softly passed
Through stairs and corridors, until at last
She came down to a gilded watergate,
Which with a golden key she opened straight,
And swiftly stept into a little boat,

And, pushing off from shore, began to float
Adown the stream, and with her tender hands
And half-bared arms, the wonder of all lands,
Rowed strongly through the starlit gusty night
As though she knew the watery way aright. 130

So, from the city being gone apace,
Turning the boat's head, did she near a space
Where, by the water's edge, a thick yew wood
Made a black blot on the dim gleaming flood :
But when she reached it, dropping either oar
Upon the grassy bank, she leapt ashore
And to a yew-bough made the boat's head fast.
Then here and there quick glances did she cast
And listened, lest some wanderer should be nigh.
Then by the river's side she tremblingly 140
Undid the bands that bound her yellow hair
And let it float about her, and made bare
Her shoulder and right arm, and, kneeling down,
Drew off her shoes, and girded up her gown,
And in the river washed her silver feet
And trembling hands, and then turned round to meet
The yew-wood's darkness, gross and palpable,
As though she made for some place known full well.

Beneath her feet the way was rough enow,
And often would she meet some trunk or bough, 150
And draw back shrinking, then press on again
With eager steps, not heeding fear or pain ;
At last an open space she came unto,
Where the faint glimmering starlight, shining through,
Showed in the midst a circle of smooth grass,
Through which, from dark to dark, a stream did pass,
And all around was darkness like a wall.

So, kneeling there, she let the wallet fall,
And from it drew a bundle of strange wood
Wound all about with strings as red as blood ; 160

Then breaking these, into a little pyre
The twigs she built, and swiftly kindling fire,
Set it alight, and with her head bent low
Sat patiently, and watched the red flames grow
Till it burned bright and lit the dreary place ;
Then, leaving it, she went a little space
Into the shadow of the circling trees
With wood-knife drawn, and whiles upon her knees
She dropt, and sweeping the sharp knife around,
Took up some scarce-seen thing from off the ground 170
And thrust it in her bosom, and at last
Into the darkness of the trees she passed.

Meanwhile, the new fire burned with clear red flame,
Not wasting aught ; but when again she came
Into its light, within her caught-up gown
Much herbs she had, and on her head a crown
Of dank night-flowering grasses, known to few.

But, casting down the mystic herbs, she drew
From out her wallet a bowl polished bright,
Brazen, and wrought with figures black and white, 180
Which from the stream she filled with water thin,
And, kneeling by the fire, cast therein
Shreddings of many herbs, and setting it
Amidst the flames, she watched them curl and flit
About the edges of the blackening brass.
But when strange fumes began therefrom to pass,
And clouds of thick white smoke about her flew,
And colourless and sullen the fire grew,
Unto her fragrant breast her hand she set,
And drew therefrom a bag of silken fret, 190
And into her right palm she gently shook
Three grains of something small that had the look
Of millet seeds, then laid the bag once more
On that sweet hidden place it kissed before,
And, lifting up her right hand, murmured low :—

‘ O Three-formed, Venerable, dost thou know
That I have left to-night my golden bed
On the sharp pavement of thy wood to shed
Blood from my naked feet, and from mine eyes
Intolerable tears ; to pour forth sighs 200
In the thick darkness, as with footsteps weak
And trembling knees I prow about to seek
That which I need forsooth, but fear to find ?
What wouldest thou, my Lady ? art thou blind,
Or sleepest thou, or dost thou, dread one, see
About me somewhat that risliketh thee ?
What crown but thine is on mine unbound hair,
What jewel on my arms, or have I care
Against the flinty windings of thy wood
To guard my feet ? or have I thought it good 210
To come before thee with unwashen hands ?

‘ And this my raiment : Goddess, from three lands
The fleeces it was woven with were brought
Where deeds of thine in ancient days were wrought,
Delos, and Argos, and the Carian mead ;
Nor was it made, O Goddess, with small heed ;
By unshod maidens was the yarn well spun,
And at the moonrise the close web begun,
And finished at the dawning of the light.

‘ Nought hides me from the unseen eyes of night 220
But this alone ; what dost thou then to me,
That at my need my flame sinks wretchedly,
And all is vain I do ? Ah, is it so
That to some other helper I must go
Better at need ; wilt thou then take my part
Once more, and pity my divided heart ?
For never was I vowed to thee alone,
Nor didst thou bid me take the tight-drawn zone,
And follow through the twilight of the trees
The glancing limbs of trim-shod huntresses. 230
Therefore, look down upon me, and see now

These grains of what thou knowest, I will throw
Upon the flame, and then, if at my need
Thou still wilt help me, help ; but if indeed
I am forsaken of thee utterly,
The naked knees of Venus will I try ;
And I may hap ere long to please her well,
And one more story they may have to tell
Who in the flowery isle her praises sing.'

So speaking, on the dulled fire did she fling 240
The unknown grains ; but when the Three-formed heard
From out her trembling lips that impious word,
She granted all her asking, though she knew
What evil road Medea hurried to
She fain had barred against her on that night.
So, now again the fire flamed up bright,
The smoke grew thin, and in the brazen bowl,
Boiling, the mingled herbs did twine and roll,
And with new light Medea's wearied eyes
Gleamed in the fireshine o'er those mysteries ; 250
And, taking a green twig from off the ground,
Therewith she stirred the mess, that cast around
A shower of hissing sparks and vapour white,
Sharp to the taste, and 'wilderer to the sight ;
Which when she saw, the vessel off she drew,
As though the ending of her toil she knew,
And cooling for awhile she let it stand,
But at the last therein she laid her hand,
And when she drew it out she thrust the same
Amidst the fire, but neither coal or flame 260
The tender rosy flesh could harm a whit,
Nor was there mark or blemish left on it.

Then did she pour whatso the bowl did hold
Into a fair gemmed phial wrought of gold
She drew out from the wallet, and straightway
Stopping the mouth, in its own place did lay

The well-wrought phial, girding to her side
The wallet that the precious thing did hide ;
Then all the remnants of the herbs she cast
On to the fire, and straight therefrom there passed 270
A high white flame, and when that sunk, outright
The fire died into the voiceless night.

But toward the river did she turn again,
Not heeding the rough ways or any pain,
But running swiftly came unto her boat,
And in the mid-stream soon was she afloat,
Drawn onward toward the town by flood of tide.

Nor heeded she that by the river side
Still lay her golden shoes, a goodly prize
To some rough fisher in whose sleepy eyes 280
They first should shine, the while he drew his net
Against the yew wood of the Goddess set.

But she, swept onward by the hurrying stream,
Down in the east beheld a doubtful gleam
That told of dawn ; so bent unto the oar
In terror lest her folk should wake before
Her will was wrought ; nor failed she now to hear
From neighbouring homesteads shrilly notes and clear
Of waking cocks, and twittering from the sedge 290
Of restless birds about the river's edge ;
And when she drew between the city walls,
She heard the hollow sound of rare footfalls
From men who needs must wake for that or this
While upon sleepers gathered dreams of bliss,
Or great distress at ending of the night,
And grey things coloured with the gathering light.

At last she reached the gilded water-gate,
And though nigh breathless, scarce she dared to wait
To fasten up her shallop to the stone,
Which yet she dared not leave ; so this being done, 300

Swiftly by passages and stairs she ran,
Trembling and pale, though not yet seen by man,
Until to Jason's chamber door she came.

And there awhile indeed she stayed, for shame
Rose up against her fear ; but mighty love
And the sea-haunting rose-crowned seed of Jove
O'ermastered both ; so trembling, on the pin
She laid her hand, but ere she entered in
She covered up again her shoulder sweet,
And dropped her dusky raiment o'er her feet : 310
Then entering the dimly-lighted room,
Where with the lamp dawn struggled, through the gloom
Seeking the prince she peered, who sleeping lay
Upon his gold bed, and abode the day
Smiling, still clad in arms, and round his sword
His fingers met ; then she, with a soft word,
Came nigh him, and from out his slackened hand
With slender rosy fingers drew the brand,
Then kneeling, laid her hand upon his breast,
And said : ' O Jason, wake up from thy rest, 320
Perchance from thy last rest, and speak to me.'

Then fell his light sleep from him suddenly,
And on one arm he rose, and clenched his hand,
Raising it up, as though it held the brand,
And on this side and that began to stare.

But bringing close to him her visage fair,
She whispered : ' Smite not, for thou hast no sword ;
Speak not above thy breath, for one loud word
May slay both thee and me. Day grows apace ;
What day thou knowest ! Canst thou see my face ? 330
Last night thou didst behold it with such eyes,
That I, Medea, wise among the wise,
The safeguard of my father and his land,
Who have been used with steady eyes to stand
In awful groves alone with Hecate,

Henceforth must call myself the bond of thee,
The fool of love ; speak not, but kiss me then,
Yea, kiss my lips, that not the best of men
Has touched ere thou. Alas, quick comes the day !
Draw back, but hearken what I have to say, 340
For every moment do I dread to hear
Thy wakened folk, or our folk drawing near ;
Therefore I speak as if with my last breath,
Shameless, beneath the shadowing wings of death,
That still may let us twain again to meet,
And snatch from bitter love the bitter sweet
That some folk gather while they wait to die.

‘ Alas, I loiter, and the day is nigh !
Soothly I came to bring thee more than this,
The memory of an unasked fruitless kiss 350
Upon thy death-day, which this day would be
If there were not some little help in me.’

Therewith from out her wallet did she draw
The phial, and a crystal without flaw,
Shaped like an apple, scored with words about,
Then said : ‘ But now I bid thee have no doubt.
With this oil hidden by these gems and gold
Anoint thine arms and body, and be bold,
Nor fear the fire-breathing bulls one whit,
Such mighty virtue have I drawn to it, 360
Whereof I give thee proof.’ Therewith her hand
She thrust into the lamp-flame that did stand
Anigh the bed, and showed it him again
Unscarred by any wound or drawn with pain,
Then said : ‘ Now, when Mars’ plain is ploughed at last
And in the furrows those ill seeds are cast,
Take thou this ball in hand and watch the thing ;
Then shalt thou see a horrid crop upspring
Of all-armed men therefrom to be thy bane,
Were I not here to make their fury vain. 370
Draw not thy sword against them as they rise,

But cast this ball amid them, and their eyes
Shall serve them then but little to see thee,
And each of others' weapons slain shall be.

' Now will my father hide his rage at heart,
And praise thee much that thou hast played thy part,
And bid thee to a banquet on this night,
And pray thee wait until to-morrow's light
Before thou triest the Temple of the Fleece.
Trust not to him, but see that unto Greece 380
The ship's prow turns, and all is ready there.
And at the banquet let thy men forbear
The maddening wine, and bid them arm them all
For what upon this night may chance to fall.

' But I will get by stealth the keys that hold
The seven locks which guard the Fleece of Gold ;
And while we try the fleece, let thy men steal,
How so they may, unto thy ready keel ;
Thus art thou saved alive with thy desire.

' But what thing will be left to me but fire ? 390
The fire of fierce despair within my heart,
The while I reap my guerdon for my part,
Curses and torments, and in no long space
Real fire of pine-wood in some rocky place,
Wreathing around my body greedily,
A dreadful beacon o'er the leaden sea.'

But Jason drew her to him, and he said :—
' Nay, by these tender hands and golden head,
That saving things for me have wrought to-night
I know not what ; by this unseen delight 400
Of thy fair body, may I rather burn,
Nor may the flame die ever if I turn
Back to my hollow ship, and leave thee here,
Who in one minute art become so dear,
Thy limbs so longed for, that at last I know
Why men have been content to suffer woe

Past telling, if the Cods but granted this,
A little while such lips as thine to kiss,
A little while to drink such deep delight.

‘What wouldst thou? Wilt thou go from me? The light
Is grey and tender yet, and in your land 411
Surely the twilight, lingering long, doth stand
’Twixt dawn and day.’

‘O Prince,’ she said, ‘I came
To save your life. I cast off fear and shame
A little while, but fear and shame are here.
The hand thou holdest trembles with my fear,
With shame my cheeks are burning, and the sound
Of mine own voice: but ere this hour comes round,
We twain will be betwixt the dashing oars,
The ship still making for the Grecian shores. 420
Farewell, till then, though in the lists to-day
Thyself shalt see me, watching out the play.’

Therewith she drew off from him, and was gone,
And in the chamber Jason left alone,
Praising the heavenly one, the Queen of Jove,
Pondered upon this unasked gift of love,
And all the changing wonder of his life.

But soon he rose to fit him for the strife,
And ere the sun his orb began to lift
O’er the dark hills, with fair Medea’s gift 430
His arms and body he anointed well,
And round about his neck he hung the spell
Against the earth-born, the fair crystal ball
Laid in a purse, and then from wall to wall,
Athwart the chamber paced full eagerly,
Expecting when the fateful time should be.

Meanwhile, Medea coming to her room
Unseen, lit up the slowly parting gloom
With scented torches: then bound up her hair,
And stripped the dark gown from her body fair, 440

And laid it with the brass bowl in a chest,
Where many a day it had been wont to rest,
Brazen and bound with iron, and whose key
No eye but hers had ever happed to see.

Then wearied, on her bed she cast her down,
And strove to think ; but soon the uneasy frown
Faded from off her brow, her lips closed tight
But now, just parted, and her fingers white
Slackened their hold upon the coverlet,
And o'er her face faint smiles began to flit,
As o'er the summer pool the faint soft air :
So instant and so kind the God was there.

450

VIII. THE TASKS

Now when she woke again the bright sun glared
In at the window, and the trumpets blared,
Shattering the sluggish air of that hot day,
For fain the king would be upon his way.
Then straight she called her maidens, who forthright
Did due observance to her body white,
And clad her in the raiment of a queen,
And round her crown they set a wreath of green.

But she descending, came into the hall,
And found her father clad in royal pall,
Holding the ivory rod of sovereignty,
And Jason and his folk were standing by.

10

Now was Æetes saying : ' Minyæ,
And you, my people, who are here by me,
Take heed, that by his wilful act to-day
This man will perish, neither will I slay
One man among you. Nay, Prince, if you will,
A safe return I give unto you still.'

But Jason answered, smiling in his joy :—

'Once more, Æetes, nay. Against this toy 20
My life is pledged, let all go to the end.'
Then, lifting up his eyes, he saw his friend
Made fresh and lovelier by her quiet rest,
And set his hand upon his mailed breast,
Where in its covering lay the crystal ball.

But the king said : 'Then let what will fall, fall !
Since time it is that we were on the way ;
And thou, O daughter, shalt be there to-day,
And see thy father's glory once more shown
Before our folk and those the wind has blown 30
From many lands to see this play played out.'

Then raised the Colchians a mighty shout.
And doubtful grew the Minyæ of the end,
Unwitting who on that day was their friend.
But down the hall the king passed, who did hold
Medea's hand, and on a car of gold
They mounted, drawn anigh the carven door,
And spearmen of the Colchians went before
And followed after ; and the Minyæ
Set close together followed solemnly, 40
Headed by Jason, at the heels of these.

So passed they through the streets and palaces
Thronged with much folk, and o'er the bridges passed,
And to the open country came at last,
Nor there went far, but turning to the right,
Into a close they came, where there were dight
Long galleries about the fateful stead,
Built all of marble fair and roofed with lead,
And carved about with stories of old time,
Framed all about with golden lines of rhyme. 50
Moreover, midmost was an image made
Of mighty Mars who maketh kings afraid,
That looked down on an altar builded fair,
Wherefrom already did a bright fire glare
And made the hot air glassy with its heat.

So in the gallery did the king take seat
With fair Medea, and the Colchians stood
Hedging the twain in with a mighty wood
Of spears and axes, while the Minyæ
Stood off a space the fated things to see. 60

Ugly and rugged was that spot of ground,
And with an iron wall was closed around,
And at the further end a monstrous cage
Of iron bars, shut in the stupid rage
Of those two beasts, and therefrom ever came
The flashing and the scent of sulphurous flame,
As with their brazen, clangorous bellowing
They hailed the coming of the Colchian king ;
Nor was there one of the seafaring men
But trembled, gazing on the deadly pen, 70
But Jason only, who before the rest
Shone like a star, having upon his breast
A golden corslet from the treasury
Of wise King Phineus by the doubtful sea,
By an Egyptian wrought who would not stay
At Salmydessa more than for a day,
But on that day the wondrous breast-plate wrought,
Which, with good will and strong help, Jason bought ;
And from that treasury his golden shoe
Came, and his thighs the king's gift covered too ; 80
But on his head his father's helm was set
Wreathed round with bay leaves, and his sword lay yet
Within the scabbard, while his ungloved hand
Bore nought within it but an olive wand.

Now King Æetes well beholding him,
Fearless of mien and so unmatched of limb,
Trembled a little in his heart as now
He bade the horn-blowers the challenge blow,
But thought, ' what strength can help him, or what art,
Or which of all the Gods be on his part ? ' 90
Impious, who knew not through what doubtful days,

E'en from his birth, and perilous rough ways
Juno had brought him safely, nor indeed
Of his own daughter's quivering lips took heed,
And restless hands wherein the God so wrought,
The wise man seeing her had known her thought.

Now Jason, when he heard the challenge blow,
Across the evil fallow 'gan to go
With face beyond its wont in nowise pale,
Nor footstep faltering, if that might avail 100
The doomed man aught : so to the cage he came,
Whose bars now glowed red-hot with spouted flame
In many a place ; nor doubted any one
Who there beheld him that his days were done,
Except his love alone, and even she,
Sickening with doubt and terror, scarce could see
The hero draw the brazen bolt aside
And throw the glowing wicket open wide.

But he alone, apart from his desire,
Stood unarmed, facing those two founts of fire, 110
Yet feared not aught, for hope and fear were dead
Within his heart, and utter hardihead
Had Juno set there ; but the awful beasts
Beholding now the best of all their feasts,
Roared in their joy and fury, till from sight
They and the prince were hidden by the white
Thick rolling clouds of sulphurous pungent smoke,
Through which upon the blinded man they broke.

But when within a yard of him they came,
Baffled they stopped, still bellowing, and the flame 120
Still spouting out from nostril and from mouth,
As from some island mountain in the south
The trembling mariners behold it cast ;
But still to right and left of him it passed,
Breaking upon him as cool water might,
Nor harming more, except that from his sight

All corners of the cage were hidden now,
Nor knew he where to seek the brazen plough,
As to and fro about the quivering cage
The monsters rushed in blind and helpless rage. 130

But as he doubted, to his eyes alone
Within the place a golden light outshone,
Scattering the clouds of smoke, and he beheld
Once more the Goddess who his head upheld
In rough Anaurus on that other tide ;
She, smiling on him, beckoned, and 'gan glide
With rosy feet across the fearful floor,
Breathing cool odours round her, till a door
She opened to him in the iron wall,
Through which he passed, and found a grisly stall 140
Of iron still, and at one end of it,
By glimmering lamps with greenish flame half lit,
Beheld the yoke and shining plough he sought ;
Which, seizing straight, by mighty strength he brought
Unto the door, nor found the Goddess there,
Who in the likeness of a damsel fair,
Colchian Metharma, through the spearmen passed,
Bearing them wine, and causeless terror cast
Into their foolish hearts, nor spared to go
And 'mid the close seafaring ranks to sow 150
Good hope of joyful ending, and then stood
Behind the maid unseen, and brought the blood
Back to her cheeks and trembling lips and wan,
With thoughts of things unknown to maid or man.

Meanwhile upon the foreheads of the twain
Had Jason cast the yoke with little pain,
And drove them now with shouts out through the door
Which in such guise ne'er had they passed before,
For never were they made the earth to till,
But rather, feeding fat, to work the will 160
Of some all-knowing man ; but now they went
Like any peasant's beasts, tamed by the scent

Of those new herbs Medea's hand had plucked,
Whose roots from evil earth strange power had sucked.

Now in the open field did Jason stand
And to the plough-stilts set his unused hand,
And down betwixt them lustily he bent ;
Then the bulls drew, and the bright ploughshare sent
The loathly fallow up on the right side,
Whilst o'er their bellowing shrilly Jason cried :— 170
' Draw nigh, O King, and thy new ploughman see,
Then mayst thou make me shepherd, too, to thee ;
Nor doubt thou, doing so, from out thy flock
To lose but one, who ne'er shall bring thee stock,
Or ram or ewe ; nor doubt the grey wolf, King,
Wood-haunting bear, dragon, or such like thing.
Ah the straight furrow ! how it mindeth me
Of the smooth parting of the land-locked sea
Over against Eubœa, and this fire
Of the fair altar where my joyful sire 180
Will pour out wine to Neptune when I come
Not empty-handed back unto my home.'

Such mocks he said ; but when the sunlight broke
Upon his armour through the sulphurous smoke,
And showed the lengthening furrow cutting through
The ugly fallow as anigh they drew,
The joyful Minyæ gave a mighty shout ;
But pale the king sat with brows knit for doubt,
Muttering : ' Whose counsel hast thou taken, then,
To do this thing, which not the best of men 190
Could do unholpen of some sorcery ?
Whoso it is, wise were he now to die
Ere yet I know him, since for many a day
Vainly for death I hope to hear him pray.'

Meanwhile, askance Medea eyed the king,
Thinking nought safe until that everything
Was finished in the Colchian land, and she

No more beheld its shores across the sea ;
But he, beholding her pale visage, thought
Grief like to his such paleness on her brought, 200
And turning to her, said : ‘ How pale thou art !
Let not this first foil go unto thine heart
Too deeply, since thou knowest certainly,
One way or other this vain fool must die.’
‘ Father,’ she said, ‘ a doubt is on me still,
Some God this is come here our wealth to spill ;
Nor is this first thing easier than the rest.’
Then stammering, she said : ‘ Were it not best
To give him that which he must have at last,
Before he slays us ? ’ But Æetes cast 210
A sharp glance at her, and a pang shot through
His weary heart as half the truth he knew.
But for one moment, and he made reply
In passionate words : ‘ Then, daughter, let me die !
And, ere I die, behold thee led along
A wretched slave to suffer grief and wrong
In far-off lands, and Æa at thy back
Nought but a huge flame hiding woe and wrack,
Before from out my willing open hand
This wonder, and the safeguard of my land 220
A God shall take ; and such this man is not.
What ! dost thou think because his eyes are hot
On tender maidens he must be a God ?
Or that because firmly this field he trod
Well-fenced with magic ? Were he like to me,
Grey-haired and lean, what Godhead wouldst thou see
In such an one ? Hold, then, thy peace of this,
And thou shalt see thy God full widely miss
The mark he aims at, when from out the earth
Spring up those brothers of an evil birth.’ 230

And therewithal he gazed at her, and thought
To see the rosy flush by such words brought
Across her face ; as in the autumn eve,

Just as the sun's last half begins to leave
The shivering world, both east and west are red.—
But calm and pale she turned about her head,
And said : ' My father, neither were these words
My words, nor would I struggle with my lords ;
Thou art full wise ; whatso thine heart would have
That do, and heed me not, who fain would save 240
This glory of thy kingdom and of thee.
But now look up, and soothly thou shalt see
Mars' acre tilled : the field is ready then,
Bid them bring forth the seed that beareth men.'

Again with her last words the shouts out-broke
From the seafarers, for, beside the yoke,
Before Mars' altar did Prince Jason stand,
Holding the wand of olive in his hand,
And on the new-turned furrow shone the sun
Behind him, and his half-day's work was done. 250

And now another marvel : for, behold,
As at the furrow's end he slacked his hold
Upon the plough-stilts, all the bellowing
Wherewith the beasts had made the grim close ring,
Fell suddenly, and all the fire died
That they were wont erewhile to scatter wide
From mouth and nostril, and their loins and knees
Stiffened, and they grew nought but images
Lifelike but lifeless, wonderful but dead, 260
Such as he makes, who many a day hath fed
His furnace with the beechwood, when the clay
Has grown beneath his deft hands day by day
And all is ready for the casting, then
Such things as these he makes for royal men.

But 'mid the shouts turned Jason to the king,
And said : ' Fair sir, behold a wondrous thing !
And since these beasts have been content to stay
Before Mars' altar, from this very day

His should they be if they were mine to give.'

'O Jason,' said the king, 'well mayst thou live 270
For many a day, since thou this deed hast done.
But for the Gods, not unto any one
Will I give gifts ; but let them take from me
What once they gave, if so the thing must be.
But do thou take this sack from out my hand
And cast its seed about the new-tilled land,
And watch the issue ; and keep words till then,
I counsel thee, O luckiest of men.'

Then Jason took the sack, and with it went 280
About that field new turned, and broadcast sent
The white teeth scattering, but ere he came
Back to the altar, and the flickering flame,
He heard from 'neath the earth a muttered sound
That grew and grew, till all that piece of ground
Swelled into little hillocks, like as where
A stricken field was foughten, but that there
Quiet the heroes' bones lie underneath
The quivering grasses and the dusky heath ;
But now these heaps the labouring earth upthrew
About Mars' acre, ever greater grew, 290
And still increased the noise. till none could hear
His fellow speak, and paleness and great fear
Fell upon all ; and Jason only stood
As stands the stout oak in the poplar wood
When winds are blowing.

Then he saw the mounds
Bursten asunder, and the muttered sounds
Changed into loud strange shouts and warlike clang,
As with freed feet at last the earth-born sprang
On to the tumbling earth, and the sunlight
Shone on bright arms clean ready for the fight. 300

But terribly they showed, for through the place
Not one there was but had his staring face,

With great wide eyes, and lips in a set smile,
Turned full on Jason, who, for a short while,
Forgot indeed Medea's warning word,
And from its golden sheath half drew his sword,
But then, remembering all, cried valiantly :
' New born ye are—new slain too shall ye be.
Take this, and round about it read your doom,
And bid them make new dwellings in the tomb,
Wherefrom ye came, nor ever should have passed.'

Therewith the ball among the host he cast,
Standing to watch what next that folk would do.
But he the ball had smitten turned unto
The one who stood by him and like a cup
Shattered his head ; then the next lifted up
His axe and slew the slayer, and straightway
Among the rest began a deadly fray.

No man gave back a foot, no breathing space
One took or gave within that dreadful place, 320
But where the vanquished stood there was he slain,
And straight the conquering arm was raised again
To meet its match and in its turn to fall ;
No tide was there of fainting and recall,
No quivering pennon o'er their heads to flit,
Nor name or eager shout called over it,
No groan of pain, and no despairing cry
From him who knows his time has come to die,
But passionless each bore him in that fight,
Scarce otherwise than as a smith might smite 330
On sounding iron or bright glittering brass.

So, little by little, did the clamour pass
As one by one each fell down in his place,
Until at last, midmost the bloody space,
One man was left, alive but wounded sore,
Who, staring round about and seeing no more
His brothers' spears against him, fixed his eyes
Upon the queller of those mysteries.

Then dreadfully they gleamed, and with no word,
He tottered towards him with uplifted sword. 340
But scarce he made three paces down the field,
Ere chill death reached his heart, and on his shield
Clattering he fell. So satiate of fight
Quickly the earth-born were, and their delight
With what it fed on perished, and one hour
Ripened the deadly fruit of that fell flower.

Then, Jason, mocking, cried unto the king :—
' O wonderful, indeed, must be the thing
Thou guardest with such wondrous guards as these ;
Make no delay, therefore, but bring the keys 350
That I may see this dear delight of all.'

But on Æetes' face a change did fall,
As though a mask had been set over it,
And smiles of little meaning 'gan to flit
O'er his thin lips, as he spake out at last :—
' No haste, dear guest, for surely now is passed
All enmity from 'twixt us, since I know
How like a God thou art ; and thou shalt go
To-morrow to thy ship, to make for Greece ;
And with no trial more, bear back the fleece 360
Along our streets, and like no conquered thing,
But with much scattered flowers and tabouring,
Bearing with it great gifts and all my love ;
And in return, I pray thee, pray to Jove,
That I may have a few more years of life,
And end at last in honour, free from strife.
And now to-night be merry, and let time
Be clean forgotten, and bring Saturn's clime
And golden days upon our flower-crowned brows,
For of the unseen future what man knows ?' 370

' O King,' said Jason, ' for these words I praise
Thy wisdom much, and wish thee happy days.
And I will give thee honour as I can,
Naming thee ever as a noble man

Through all the lands I come to : and will take
Thy gifts, indeed, and thou, for Jason's sake,
Shalt have gifts too, whatso thy soul may wish,
From out our keel that has escaped the fish.'

So spake those wary foes, fair friends in look,
And so in words great gifts they gave and took, 380
And had small profit, and small loss thereby.
Nor less Medea feigned, but angrily
Regarded Jason, and across her brow
Drew close her veil, nor doubted the king now
Her faith and loyalty.

So from the place
Back toward the town they turned at a soft pace,
In guise of folk that hold high festival,
Since straightly had Æetes bid that all
Should do the strangers pleasure on that day.
But warily went Jason on the way, 390
And through his folk spread words, to take good heed
Of what might come, and ready be at need,
Nor yet to take Æetes for their friend,
Since even then he plotted how to end
Their quest and lives : therefore he bade them spare
The wine that night, nor look on damsels fair ;
But that, the feast done, all should stealthily
Get to the quay, and round about to sea
Turn Argo's head, and wait like hounds in slip,
Holding the oars, within the hollow ship. 400

' Nor doubt,' said he, ' that good and glorious
The end shall be, since all the Gods for us
Are fighting certainly : but should death come
Upon me in this land, then turn back home,
Nor wait till they shall lay your bones with mine,
Since now I think to go unto the shrine,
The while ye wait, and take therefrom the fleece,
Not all unholpen, and depart in peace,
While yet the barbarous king beholds us dead

In dreams alone, or through his waking head 410
The vile plots chase each other for our death.'

These things he said, but scarce above his breath,
Unto wise Nestor, who beside him went,
Who unto Butes straight the message sent,
And he to Phlias, so the words at last
Throughout the wondering seafarers had passed,
And so were all made ready for the night.

But on that eve, with manifold delight,
Æetes feasted them in his fair hall :
But they, well knowing what might chance to fall, 420
Sat saying little, nor drank deep of wine ;
Until at last the old king gave the sign
To break the feast up, and within a while
All seemed asleep throughout the mighty pile.

All seemed asleep, but now Medea went
With beating heart to work out her intent,
Scarce doubtful of the end, since only two
In all the world, she and Æetes, knew
Where the keys were, far from the light of day,
Beneath the palace. So, in garments grey, 430
Like the soft creeping twilight did she go,
Until she reached a passage far below
The river, past whose oozing walls of stone
She and the king alone had ever gone.

Now she, who thus far had come through the dark,
Stopped, and in haste striking a little spark
From something in her hand, lit up a lamp,
Whose light fell on an iron door, with damp
All rusted red, which with a key of brass
She opened, and there-through made haste to pass, 440
Shuddering a little, as her feet 'gan tread
Upon a dank cold floor, though overhead
High-arched the place was, fairly built enow.

But she across the slippery floor did go

Unto the other wa^{ll}, wherein was built
A little aumbrye, with a door o'er-gilt,
That with the story of King Athamas
And Phryxus and the ram all carven was.
There did she draw forth from her balmy breast
A yellow flowering herb, that straight she pressed 450
Upon the lock, low muttering the while ;
But soon across her face there passed a smile,
As backward in the lock the bolts did turn,
And the door opened ; then a golden urn
She saw within the aumbrye, whercon she
Drew out the thing she sought for eagerly,
The seven keys with sere-cloth done about.
Then through the dreary door did she pass out,
And made it fast, and went her way once more
Through the black darkness on from floor to floor. 460
And so, being come to Jason, him she found
All armed, and ready ; therefore, with no sound,
She beckoned him to follow, and the twain
Passed through the brazen doors, locked all in vain,
Such virtue had the herb Medea bore,
And passing, did they leave ajar each door,
To give more ease unto the Minyæ.
So out into the fresh night silently
The lovers passed, the lovehest of the land ;
But as they went, neither did hand touch hand, 470
Or face seek face ; for, gladsome as they were,
Trembling with joy to be at last so near
The wished-for day, some God yet seemed to be
'Twixt the hard past and their felicity.

IX. THE TAKING OF THE FLEECE AND DEPARTURE
OF THE ARGO

But when they reached the precinct of the God,
And on the hallowed turf their feet now trod,
Medea turned to Jason. and she said :—

‘ O love, turn round, and note the goodlihead

My father’s palace shows beneath the stars.

Bethink thee of the men grown old in wars,

Who do my bidding ; what delights I have,

How many ladies lie in wait to save

My life from toil and carefulness, and think

How sweet a cup I have been used to drink,

10

And how I cast it to the ground for thee.

Upon the day thou weariest of me,

I wish that thou mayst somewhat think of this,

And ’twixt thy new-found kisses, and the bliss

Of something sweeter than thine old delight,

Remember thee a little of this night

Of marvels, and this starlit, silent place,

And these two lovers, standing face to face.’

‘ O love,’ he said, ‘ by what thing shall I swear,

That while I live thou shalt not be less dear

20

Than thou art now ? ’

‘ Nay, sweet,’ she said, ‘ let be ;

Wert thou more fickle than the restless sea,

Still should I love thee, knowing thee for such ;

Whom I know not, indeed, but fear the touch

Of Fortune’s hand when she beholds our bliss,

And knows that nought is good to me but this.

‘ But now be ready, for I long full sore

To hear the merry dashing of the oar,

And feel the freshness of the following breeze

That sets me free, and sniff the rough salt seas.

30

Look ! yonder thou mayst see armed shadows steal
Down to the quays, the guiders of thy keel ;
Now follow me, though little shalt thou do
To gain this thing, if Hecate be true
Unto her servant. Nay, draw not thy sword,
And, for thy life, speak not a single word
Until I bid thee, else may all be lost,
And of this game our lives yet pay the cost.'

Then toward the brazen temple-door she went,
Wherefrom, half-open, a faint gleam was sent ; 40
For little need of lock it had forsooth,
Because its sleepless guardian knew no ruth,
And had no lust for precious things or gold ;
Whom, drawing near, Jason could now behold,
As back Medea thrust the heavy door,
For prone he lay upon the gleaming floor,
Not moving, though his restless, glittering eyes
Left them no hope of wile or of surprise.
Hideous he was, where all things else were fair ;
Dull-skinned, foul-spotted, with lank rusty hair 50
About his neck ; and hooked yellow claws
Just showed from 'neath his belly and huge jaws,
Closed in the hideous semblance of a smile.
Then Jason shuddered, wondering with what guile
That fair king's daughter such a beast could tame,
And of his sheathed sword had but little shame.

But being within the doors both mantle grey
And heavy gown Medea cast away,
And in thin clinging silk alone was clad,
And round her neck a golden chain she had, 60
Where to was hung a harp of silver white.
Then the great dragon, at that glittering sight,
Raised himself up upon his loathly feet,
As if to meet her, while her fingers sweet
Already moved amongst the golden strings,
Preluding nameless and delicious things ;

But now she beckoned Jason to her side,
For slowly towards them 'gan the beast to glide,
And when close to his love the hero came,
She whispered breathlessly : ' On me the blame 70
If here we perish ; if I give the word,
Then know that all is lost, and draw thy sword,
And manlike die in battle with the beast ;
So dying shalt thou fail to see at least
This body thou desiredst so to see,
In thy despite here mangled wretchedly.
Peace, for he cometh—O thou Goddess bright,
What help wilt thou be unto me this night ? '

So murmured she, while ceaselessly she drew
Her fingers through the strings, and fuller grew 80
The tinkling music, but the beast drawn nigh
Went slower still, and turning presently
Began to move around them in a ring.
And as he went, there fell a strange rattling
Of his dry scales ; but as he turned, she turned,
Nor failed to meet the eyes that on her burned
With steadfast eyes, and, lastly, clear and strong
Her voice broke forth in sweet melodious song :—

' O evil thing, what brought thee here
To be a wonder and a fear 90
Unto the river-haunting folk ?
Was it the God of Day that broke
The shadow of thy windless trees,
Gleaming from golden palaces,
And shod with light and armed with light,
Made thy slime stone, and day thy night,
And drove thee forth unwillingly
Within his golden house to lie ?

' Or was it the slim messenger,
Who, treading softly, free from fear, 100
Beguiled thee with his smiling face

From out thy Lim abiding place
To follow him and set thee down
Midst of this twice-washed royal town ?

‘ Or, was it rather the dread Lord
Who slayeth without spear or sword,
And with the flower-culling maid
Of Enna, dwelleth in the shade,
Who, with stern voice compelling thee,
Hath set thee here, our bane to be ?

110

‘ Or was it Venus, seeking far
A sleepless guard ’gainst grief and war,
Who, journeying through thy dismal land,
Beside the heavy lake did stand,
And with no word, but very sight
Of tender limbs and bosom white,
Drew forth thy scaly feet and hard,
To follow over rock and shard ?

‘ Or rather, thy dull, waveless lake
Didst thou not leave for her dread sake,
Who, passing swift from glade to glade,
The forest-dwellers makes afraid
With shimmering of her silver bow
And dreadful arrows ? Even so
I bid thee now to yield to me,
Her maid, who overmastered thee,
The three-formed dreadful one who reigns
In heaven and the fiery plains,
But on the green earth best of all.

120

‘ Lo, now thine upraised crest let fall,
Relax thy limbs, let both thine eyes
Be closed, and bestial fantasies
Fill thy dull head till dawn of day
And we are far upon our way.’

130

As thus she sung the beast seemed not to hear
Her words at first, but ever drew anear,

Circling about them, and Medea's face
Grew pale unto the lips, though still the place
Rung with the piercing sweetness of her song ;
But slower soon he dragged his length along 140
And on his limbs he tottered, till at last
All feebly by the wondering prince he passed,
And whining to Medea's feet he crept,
With eyes half closed, as though wellnigh he slept,
And there before her laid his head adown ;
Who, shuddering, on his wrinkled neck and brown
Set her white foot, and whispered : ' Haste, O love !
Behold the keys ; haste ! while the Gods above
Are friendly to us ; there behold the shrine
Where thou canst see the lamp of silver shine. 150
Nay, draw not death upon both thee and me
With fearless kisses ; fear, until the sea
Shall fold green arms about us lovingly,
And kindly Venus to thy keel be nigh.'

Then lightly from her soft side Jason stept,
While still upon the beast her foot she kept,
Still murmuring gently many an unknown word,
As when through half-shut casements the brown bird
We hearken when the night is come in June,
And thick-leaved woods are 'twixt us and his tune. 160

But Jason, going swiftly with good heart,
Came to the wished-for shrine built all apart
Midmost the temple, that on pillars stood
Of jasper green, and marble red as blood
All white itself and carven cunningly
With Neptune bringing from the wavy sea
The golden shining ram to Athamas ;
And the first door thereof of silver was,
Wrought over with a golden glittering sun
That seemed well-nigh alike the heavenly one. 170
Such art therein the cunningest of men

Had used, which li'tle Jason heeded then,
But thrusting in the lock the smallest key
Of those he bore, it opened easily ;
And then five others, neither wrought of gold,
Or carved with tales, or lovely to behold,
He opened ; but before the last one stayed
His hand, whercin the heavy key he weighed,
And pondering, in low muttered word, he said :—

‘ The prize is reached, which yet I somewhat dread 180
To draw unto me ; since I know indeed
That henceforth war and toil shall be my meed.—
Too late to fear, it was too late, the hour
I left the grey cliffs and the beechen bower,
So here I take hard life and deathless praise,
Who once desired nought but quiet days,
And painless life, not empty of delight ;
I, who shall now be quickener of the fight,
Named by a great name—a far-babbled name,
The ceaseless seeker after praise and fame. 190

‘ May all be well, and on the noisy ways
Still may I find some wealth of happy days.’

Therewith he threw the last door open wide,
Whose hammered iron did the marvel hide,
And shut his dazzled eyes, and stretched his hands
Out toward the sea-born wonder of all lands,
And plunged them deep within the locks of gold,
Grasping the fleece within his mighty hold.

Which when Medea saw, her gown of grey
She caught up from the ground, and drew away 200
Her wearied foot from off the rugged beast,
And while from her soft strain she never ceased,
In the dull folds she hid her silk from sight,
And then, as bending 'neath the burden bright,
Jason drew nigh, joyful, yet still afraid,
She met him, and her wide grey mantle laid

The east wind drives the rack to Thessaly,
And lightly do such kings as this one sleep
If now and then small watch their servants keep.'

Then saw Medea men like shadows grey
Rise from the darksome decks, who took straightway
With murmured joy, from Jason's outstretched hands,
The conquered fleece, the wonder of all lands,
While with strong arms he raised the royal maid,
And in their hold the precious burthen laid, 250
And scarce her dainty feet could touch the deck,
Ere down he leapt, and little now did reck
That loudly clanged his armour therewithal.

But, turning townward, did Medea call :—
' O noble Jason, and ye heroes strong,
To sea, to sea ! nor pray ye loiter long ;
For surely shall ye see the beacons flare
Ere in mid stream ye are, and running fair
On toward the sea with tide, and oar, and sail.
My father wakes, nor bides he to bewail 260
His loss and me ; I see his turret gleam
As he goes towards the beacon, and down stream
Absyrtus lurks before the sandy bar
In mighty keel well manned and dight for war.'

But as she spoke, rattling the cable slipped
From out the hawse-hole, and the long oars dipped
As from the quays the heroes pushed away,
And in the loosened sail the wind 'gan play ;
But e'en as they unto the stroke leaned back,
And Nauplius, catching at the main-sheet slack 270
Had drawn it taut, out flared the beacon wide,
Lighting the waves, and they heard folk who cried :
' Awake, awake, awake, O Colchian folk ! '
And all about the blare of horns outbroke,
As watch-tower answered watch-tower down the stream,
Where far below they saw the bale-fires gleam ;
And galloping of horses now they heard,

And clang of arms, and cries of men afraid ;
For now the merchant mariners who lay
About the town, thought surely an ill day 280
Had dawned upon them while they slept at ease,
And, half awake, pushed madly from the quays
With crash of breaking oars and meeting ships,
And cries and curses from outlandish lips ;
So fell the quiet night to turmoil sore,
While in the towers, over the uproar,
Melodiously the bells began to ring.

But Argo, leaping forward to the swing
Of measured oars, and leaning to the breeze,
Sped swiftly 'twixt the dark and whispering trees ; 290
Nor longer now the heroes silence kept,
So joyously their hearts within them leapt,
But loud they shouted, seeing the gold fell
Laid heaped before them, and longed sore to tell
Their fair adventure to the maids of Greece ;
And as the mingled noises did decrease
With added distance, and behind them night
Grew pale with coming of the eastern light,
Across the strings his fingers Orpheus drew,
And through the woods his winged music flew :— 300

‘ O surely, now the fisherman
Draws homeward through the water wan
Across the bay we know so well,
And in the sheltered chalky dell
The shepherd stirs ; and now afield
They drive the team with white wand peeled,
Muttering across the barley-bread
At daily toil and dreary-head.

‘ And midst them all, perchance, my love
Is waking, and doth gently move 310
And stretch her soft arms out to me,

Forgetting thousand leagues of sea ;
And now her body I behold,
Unhidden but by hair of gold,
And now the silver water kiss,
The crown of all delight and bliss.
And now I see her bind her hair
And do upon her raiment fair,
And now before the altar stand,
With incense in her outstretched hand, 320
To supplicate the Gods for me ;
Ah, one day landing from the sea,
Amid the maidens shall I hear
Her voice in praise, and see her near,
Holding the gold-wrapt laurel crown,
'Midst of the shouting, wondering town !'

So sung he joyously, nor knew that they
Must wander yet for many an evil day
Or ever the dread Gods should let them come
Back to the white walls of their long-left home. 330
But on the shouting heroes gazed adown
The foundress of their triumph and renown,
And to her lover's side still drew anear,
With heart now swelled with joy, now sick with fear,
And cheeks now flushed with love, now pale and wan,
As now she thought upon that goodly man,
And now on the uncertain, dreadful Gods,
And now upon her father, and the odds
He might well raise against the reckless crew,
For all his mighty power full well she knew ; 340
No wonder therefore if her heart grew cold,
And if her wretched self she did behold,
Led helpless through some old familiar place,
With none to turn on her a pitying face,
Unto the death in life she still might win ;
And yet, if she should 'scape the meed of sin

This once, the world was fair and bright enough,
And love there was to lead her o'er the rough
Of life, and love to crown her head with flowers,
And fill her days and nights with happy hours. 350

Now swift beneath the oar-strokes Argo flew,
While the sun rose behind them, and they drew
Unto the river's mouth, nor failed to see
Absyrtus' galley waiting watchfully
Betwixt them and the white-topped turbid bar.
Therefore they gat them ready now for war
With joyful hearts, for sharp they sniffed the sea,
And saw the great waves tumbling green and free
Outside the bar upon the way to Greece,
The rough green way to glory and sweet peace. 360

Then to the prow gat Jason, and the maid
Must needs be with him, though right sore afraid,
As, nearing now the Colchian ship, they hung
On balanced oars ; but the wild Arcas strung
His deadly bow, and clomb into the top.

Then Jason cried : ' Absyrtus, will ye stop
Our peaceful keel, or let us take the sea ?
Soothly, have we no will to fight with thee
If we may pass unfoughten, therefore say,
What is it thou wilt have this dawn of day ? ' 370

Now on the other prow Absyrtus stood,
His visage red with eager wrathful blood,
And in his right hand shook a mighty spear,
And said : ' O seafarers, ye pass not here,
For gifts or prayers, but if it must be so,
Over our sunken bulwarks shall ye go ;
Nor ask me why, for thus my father wills.
Yet, as I now behold you, my heart thrills
With wrath indeed ; and hearken for what cause,
That ye against all friendship and good laws 380
Bear off my sister with you ; wherefore now

Mars give you courage and a brazen brow !
That ye may try this dangerous pass in vain,
For soothly of your slaughter am I fain.'

Then Jason wrathfully threw up his head,
But ere the shout came, fair Medea said,
In trembling whisper thrilling through his ear :—

' Haste, quick upon them ! if before is fear,
Behind is death ! ' Then Jason turning, saw
A tall ship staggering with the gusty flaw, 390
Just entering the long reach where they were,
And heard her horns through the fresh morning air.

Then lifted he his hand, and with a cry
Back flew the balanced oars full orderly,
And toward the doomed ship mighty Argo passed ;
Thereon Absyrtus shouted loud, and cast
His spear at Jason, that before his feet
Stuck in the deck ; then out the arrows fleet
Burst from the Colchians ; and scarce did they spare
Medea's trembling side and bosom fair ; 400

But Jason, roaring as the lioness
When round her helpless whelps the hunters press,
Whirled round his head his mighty brass-bound spear,
That flying, smote the Prince beneath the ear,
As Arcas' arrow sunk into his side.
Then falling, scarce he met the rushing tide,
Ere Argo's mighty prow had thrust apart
The huddled oars, and through the fair ship's heart
Had thrust her iron beak, and the green wave
Rushed in as rush the waters through a cave 410
That tunnels half a sea-girt lonely rock.

Then drawing swiftly backward from the shock,
And heeding not the cries of fear and woe,
They left the waters dealing with their foe ;
And at the following ship threw back a shout,
And seaward o'er the bar drave Argo out.

Then joyful felt all men as now at last

From hill to green hill of the sea they passed ;
But chiefly joyed Medea, as now grew
The Colchian hills behind them faint and blue, 420
And like a white speck showed the following ship.
There 'neath the canopy, lip pressed to lip,
They sat and told their love, till scarce he thought
What precious burden back to Greece he brought
Besides the maid, nor for his kingdom cared,
As on her beauty with wet eyes he stared,
And heard her sweet voice soft as in a dream,
When all seems gained, and trouble dead does seem.

So passed this day, and she no less forgot 430
That wreck upon the bar, the evil spot,
Red with a brother's blood, where long was stayed
The wrathful king as from the stream he weighed
The bleeding body of his well-loved son.

Lo in such wise their journey was begun,
And so began short love and long decay,
Sorrow that bides and joy that fleets away.

X. THE NORTHWARD JOURNEY

The heroes made with all haste for the straits, but at dawn the wind failed and a thick mist enveloped them. Once more the sacred oak-beam in the prow spake forth and gave warning of the fate that lay in store. Æetes with his war-galleys was lying in wait for them at the Bosphorus. Therefore the gods decreed they should find their way back to Iolchos by a route to the north-west. They entered an estuary ¹ on the flood-tide and were carried up-river through dark forests peopled by strange beasts and uncouth men. (Book X, 1-230.)

¹The Dnieper.

BUT every day, more and more sluggishly
And shorter time, the water from the sea
Ran up, and failed ere eve of the third day,
Though slower took the downward stream its way,
Grown wide and dull ; and here and there the wood
Would draw away and leave some dismal rood
Of quaggy land about the river's edge,
Where 'mid the oozes and decaying sedge
There wallowed ugly, nameless, dull-scaled things.

These now the weary company of kings, 10
As they passed by, could not endure to see
Unscathed of arrows, turning lazily
Blue-gleaming slimy sides up in the sun,
Whose death swift Atalanta first begun.
For as anigh the prow she chanced to stand,
Unto her bow did she set foot and hand,
And strung it, and therefrom an arrow sent
That through the belly of a monster went,
Legged like a lizard, maned with long lank hair.
He, screaming, straight arose from out his lair, 20
With many another of his kith and kin,
And swiftly getting to the water thin,
Made for the ship ; and though upon the way
Some few among them lost the light of day,
Smit by Thessalian arrows, yet the most
The narrow strip of water fairly crossed,
And scaled the ship's sides, and therewith began
A fearful battle betwixt worm and man.
Not long it dured ; though Ceneus through the mail
Was bitten, and one monster's iron tail 30
Smote down Asterion, whom Eribotes
Made shift to save ; but chiefly amid these
She who had been the first to raise the strife
Was hard bested, and scarce escaped with life.

One worm 'twixt ship and shore her arrow slew,
But ere her amazonian axe she drew,

Another monster had got slimy hold
Of her slim ankles, and cast fold on fold .
About her legs, and binding thigh to thigh,
Wrapt round her sides, enfolding mightily 40
Her foiled right hand, then raised aloft his crest
Against her unembraced tender breast ;
But she, with one unarmed hand yet left free,
Still strove to ward the blow, but giddily,
Because the deadly rings still tighter grew
About her heart ; yet as she fell, there flew
A feathered javelin swiftly from the left,
By Arcas desperately cast, that cleft
The monster's head, and dulled his glittering eyes.

Then the glad Minyæ with joyous cries 50
Cleared Argo's decks of all the monstrous things,
As from the maiden's limbs the slimy rings
Slacked and fell off : but she, so saved from death,
Sat weary by the mast, and drew glad breath,
And vowed the grey and deadly thing should shine,
Wrought all of gold, within Diana's shrine,
In woody fair Arcadia. But the rest,
When they with poured-out wine the Gods had blest,
And flayed the slain worms, gat them to the oar,
And 'gainst the sluggish stream slid past the shore. 60

Further inland the forests began to thin, and in the clearings herds of deer and wild cattle browsed. The heroes landed and joined in the chase. Arcas and two companions lost their way, and were made captive by wild folk, but at night they eluded their captors and reached the Argo safely.

The stream now began to narrow, the current became swifter, and ahead they heard the thunder of waterfall and cataract. At Erginus' bidding they dragged the Argo ashore, and hauled her on logs along the bank till the rapids were passed. Higher up, the main river was joined by a smoother

branch,¹ on which they launched their boat and gat them onward toward the winter and the north. (Book X, 291-end.)

Now might the Minyæ hoist up to the breeze
Their well-wrought sail, for barren of all trees
The banks were now become, not rising high
Above the deep green stream that sluggishly
Strove with the strenuous Argo's cleaving stem.

So after all their toil was rest to them
A little while, and on the deck they sat,
Not wholly sad, and talked of this and that,
Or watched the restless fishes turn and wind,
Or the slim kestrel hanging in the wind, 70
Or the wild cattle scouring here and there
About the plain ; for in a plain they were,
Edged round with hills, with quaggy brooks cleft through,
That 'mid their sedges toward the river drew,
And harboured noisome things, and death to man.
But looking up stream, the green river ran
Unto their eyes, from out the mountains high,
For 'twixt no pass could they behold the sky,
Though at the mountain's foot, far through the plain,
They saw the wandering river shine again, 80
Then vanish wholly ; therefore through their ease,
With fear did they the jealous Gods appease.

Natheless, for two days did they speed along,
Not toiling aught, and cheered with tale and song ;
But the third noonday, bringing them anear
The mountains, turned to certain grief their fear,
For now they saw the stream, grown swift but deep,
Come from a cavern in the mountain steep.
Nor would it help them aught upon that tide
To heave the swift ship out on either side, 90
For all that plain the mountain ridge bestrode,
And scarcely could a horseman find a roaċ

¹ The Pripet.

Through any pass into the farther land.

Then 'mid the downcast men did Jason stand,
And lifting up his voice, said : ' Minyæ,
Why right and left upon this plain look ye,
Where dwell but beasts or beast-like men alone ?
Look rather to that heap of rugged stone,
Pierced with the road that leadeth to the north
Yea, if from very hell this stream runs forth, 100
Let us go thither, bearing in our hands
This golden, hard-won marvel of all lands.
Yet, since not death it bears, but living things,
Shall we not reach thereby the sea that rings
The whole world round, and so make shift to reach
Sunny Eubœa, and fair Argo beach
Before Iolchos, having lost no whit
Of all our gains ? Or else here must we sit
Till hunger slays us on some evil day,
Or wander till our raiment falls away 110
From off our bodies, and we, too, become
Like those ye saw, not knowing any home,
Voiceless, desiring nought but daily food,
And seeking that like beasts within the wood,
Each for himself ; and all our glory gone,
Our names but left upon some carven stone
In Greece, still growing fainter day by day.
And this work wrought within the sunny bay,
Nor yet without the help of Gods, shall lie
A wonder to the wild beasts passing by, 120
While on her fallen masts the sedge-birds sing,
Unseen of men, a clean forgotten thing.'

So spake he, setting courage in their hearts
To try the unknown dark, and to their parts
All gat them swiftly, and they struck the mast,
And, deftly steered, from out the sunlight passed
Into the cold, bat-haunted cavern low,
And, thrusting out with poles, made shift to go

Against the stream that with a hollow sound
Smote Argo's stem. Then Jason, looking round, 130
Trembled himself, for now, indeed, he thought,
Though to the toiling heroes he said nought :—
' What do we, if this cavern narrows now,
Or over falls these burrowing waters flow,
And drive us back again into the sun,
Cursing the day this quest was first begun,
Or somewhat traps us here, as well it may,
And ends us all, far from the light of day ? '

Therewith he bade them light the torches up,
And to the mountain Gods to pour a cup, 140
And one unto the river Gods, and pray
That they might come into the light of day,
When they had pierced the mountain through and through.
So from the torches trains of sparkles flew,
And strangely flashed their arms in that dark place,
And white and haggard showed each anxious face
Against those dripping walls of unknown stone.

But now in Jason's hand the cup outshone,
Full of red wine, pressed by the Grecian sea,
And lifting high his hand, he cried : ' O ye, 150
Both Gods and nymphs who in this wild land dwell,
In hill or river, henceforth may ye tell
How through your midst have passed the Minyæ ;
And if, ye helping, the cold northern sea
We safely reach, and our desired home,
Thither the fame and fear of you shall come,
And there a golden-pillared house shall stand,
Unto our helpers in this savage land.
Nor when we reach the other side of this
Grim cavern, due observance shall ye miss, 160
For whatso on the teeming plain we snare,
Slain with due rites shall smoke before you there.'

So spake he, and twice poured the fragrant wine ;
But they, well-pleased to have the gift divine,

And noting well his promises, took heed
Unto his prayers, and gave the heroes speed.
Then Jason straightway bade more torches light,
And Argo pushed along, flared through the night
Of the dank cavern, and the dull place rang
With Grecian names, as loud the heroes sang, 170
For hope had come into their hearts at last.

So through the winding cave three days they passed.
But on the fourth day Lynceus gave a cry,
Smiting his palms together, who could spy,
Far off, a little white speck through the dark,
As when the 'lated traveller sees the spark
Of some fair-lighted homestead glitter bright.
But soon to all men's eyes the joyous sight
Showed clear, and with redoubled force they pushed
Swift Argo forth, who through the water rushed 180
As though she longed for daylight too and air.
And so within an hour they brought her there,
And on the outer world the sun shone high,
For it was noon ; so mooring presently,
On the green earth they clean forgot their pain,
For joy to feel the sweet soft grass again,
And see the fair things of the world, and feel
The joyous sunlight that the sick can heal,
And soft tormenting of the western wind.

And there for joy about their heads they twined 190
The yellow autumn flowers of the field,
And of untimely sorrow were they healed
By godlike conquering wine ; nor yet forgot
Their promise to the Gods, but on that spot,
Of turf and stones they built up altars twain,
And sent the hunters forth, and not in vain ;
For Atalanta, swifter than a man,
Arcas, and mighty Theseus, overran
A white high-crested bull, and tough cords threw
About his horns, and so by main force drew 200

The great beast to the altars, where the knife
Of wise Asclepius ended his hot life.

As they drew nearer the river's source, the stream became shallow, and so narrow that they could not use the oar. Argus in a dream was counselled by Iris to build a wooden trolley on which to drag the Argo overland to the source of another river ¹ that would bring them in the spring into the Northern Seas.² Many toilsome days the heroes spent hauling their ship along on its strange waggon. But at length they reached the deep dark river of which Iris had spoken. They broke up their waggon, and of the beams raised up a mighty altar, and on it laid a goodly sacrifice, and burned all in honour of the goddess who had given such timely aid. Meantime winter descended upon them in full blast. As the goddess had bid them, they beached the Argo near a great oak-wood, and built wooden huts to house them for the winter, and a palisade to ward off attack by man or beast. Here for ten dreary weeks they awaited impatiently the coming of spring and beguiled away the time with hunting and feasting and minstrelsy. (Book XI, 143-end.)

March came at last and with it rain and milder winds. The earth soon shed its snowy pall and the river burst violently from its icy bonds. Once more the heroes launched their good ship and joyfully turned her head seawards. They passed through vast wooded plains, and soon reached great marshy flats whence a northern breeze blew that savoured strongly of the sea. Next day they struggled with a will against a full flood-tide: the morrow following they passed out into the open sea upon the ebb. (Book XII, 1-164.)

Now hoisting sail, and labouring with the oar,
They passed along the amber-bearing shore,
A low coast, backed by pine-woods: none the less
Some days they needs must pass in idleness,

¹ The Vistula.

² The Baltic.

And lie-to, 'midst white rolling mist and blind,
Lest Argo on some shallow death should find ;
Yet holpen by the steersman's mighty sire,
Safely they sailed until the land rose higher, 210
And through a narrow strait at last they went,
Brushing the unknown coast, where, with bows bent,
They saw a skin-clad folk awaiting them,
Who stood to watch the well-built Argo stem
The rushing tide upon the shingly beach,
And thence, as knowing that they could not reach
The heroes with their arrows, shook their spears,
And shouted unknown threats to careless ears.

But when against the midst of them they came,
Forth strode a huge man, with red hair like flame, 220
And his huge bow against them strongly drew.
Wherefrom a swift shaft straight to Argo flew,
And whistling over Jason's head, stuck fast
Over the barb-points in the gleaming mast.
Then all men praised that archer ; but the man
Who in Arcadian woods all beasts outran,
Straight drew his bow unto the arrow-head,
And no man doubted that wild king was dead :
Natheless, unmoved they saw the archer stand,
And toward the Arcadian arrow stretch his hand, 230
That midmost of his skin-clad body smote,
But bounded back as from an iron coat.
Then loud his people shouted, and all drew
Their feeble bows, but short their arrows flew,
And through the straits the wondering Minyæ
Passed out unscathed into the open sea,
While still of wizardry and charms they spoke.

But Jason from the mast the arrow broke,
That erewhile had so scantily missed his life,
And found it scored as by a sharp-edged knife, 240
From barb to notch, with what seemed written words,
In tongue unknown to aught but beasts and birds ;

So when Medea saw it, straight she said :

'Fair love, now praise some God thou art not dead,
For from the Cimbrian folk this arrow came,
And its sharp barbs within a wizard's flame
Were forged with peril, and the shaft of it
Was carved by one who in great fear did sit
Within the haunted places of the wood,
And tears are on its feathers, and red blood : 250
Nor ask me now the name of her who taught
This wisdom to me : but two arrows brought
From this same folk to ÆEa have I seen,
By one whose wounds will evermore be green
While on the earth he dwells.' So spoke the maid,
But Jason, wondering at the words she said,
Gazed on her fair face, smiling lovingly,
Nor cared to think that he must one day die.

Lost awhile in the mists of the Northern Seas, they made the narrow straits, and skirted the white-cliffed British coasts. Leaving Britain astern, they entered the open sea and, carried southward by a favouring breeze, they sighted no land until they drew nigh the Pillars of Hercules, through which they pass into the Mediterranean. (Book XII, 220-end.)

XI. THE SIRENS

The heroes skirted the coasts of Spain and France, and at the end of the fourth day lay to for the night off the coast of Italy. Here was the island of *Ææa*, the abode of *Circe*, the queen of sorceresses, and on the morrow *Medea* landed alone to learn from her what should befall them ere they reached the shores of *Thessaly*. *Circe* warned her of the *Sirens* and counselled her how to avoid the fate of those who fell victims to the fascination of their song. To cleanse away the guilt

Thereat Medea troubled, for she knew
That nigh the dreadful sands at last they drew, 30
For certainly the Sirens' song she heard,
Though yet her ear could shape it to no word,
And by their faces could the queen behold
How sweet it was, although no tale it told,
To those worn toilers o'er the bitter sea.

Now, as they sped along, they presently,
Rounding a headland, reached a little bay,
Walled from the sea by splintered cliffs and grey,
Capped by the thymy hills' green wind-beat head,
Where 'mid the whin the burrowing rabbits fed. 40
And 'neath the cliff they saw a belt of sand,
'Twixt Nereus' pasture and the high scarped land,
Whereon, yet far off, could their eyes behold
White bodies moving, crowned and girt with gold,
Wherefrom it seemed that lovely music welled.

So when all thus the grey-eyed queen beheld,
She said : ' O Jason, I have made thee wise
In this and other things : turn then thine eyes
Seaward, and note the ripple of the sea,
Where there is hope as well as fear for thee. 50
Nor look upon the death that lurketh there
'Neath the grey cliff, though sweet it seems and fair ;
For thou art young upon this day to die.
Take then the helm, and gazing steadily
Upon the road to Greece, make strong thine hand
And steer us toward the lion-haunted land :
And thou, O Thracian ! if thou e'er hast moved
Men's hearts with stories of the Gods who loved,
And men who suffered, move them on this day,
Taking the deadly love of death away, 60
That even now is stealing over them,
While still they gaze upon the ocean's he-m,
Where their undoing is if they but knew.'

But while she spake, still nigher Argo drew
Unto the yellow edges of the shore,
And little help she had of ashen oar,
For as her shielded side rolled through the sea,
Silent with glittering eyes the Minyæ
Gazed o'er the surge, for they were nigh enow
To see the gusty wind of evening blow 70
Long locks of hair across those bodies white,
With golden spray hiding some dear delight ;
Yea, nigh enow to see their red lips smile,
Wherefrom all song had ceased now for a while,
As though they deemed the prey was in the net,
And they no more had need a bait to set
But their own bodies, fair beyond man's thought,
Under the grey cliff, hidden not of aught
But of such mist of tears as in the eyes
Of those seafaring men might chance to rise. 80

A moment Jason gazed, then through the waist
Ran swiftly, and with trembling hands made haste
To trim the sail, then to the tiller ran,
And thrust aside the skilled Milesian man,
Who with half-open mouth, and dreamy eyes,
Stood steering Argo to that land of lies ;
But as he staggered forward, Jason's hand
Hard on the tiller steered away from land,
And as her head a little now fell off
Unto the wide sea, did he shout this scoff 90
To Thracian Orpheus : ' Minstrel, shall we die,
Because thou hast forgotten utterly
What things she taught thee that men call divine,
Or will thy measures but lead folk to wine,
And scented beds, and not to noble deeds ?
Or will they fail as fail the shepherd's reeds
Before the trumpet, when these sea-witches
Pipe shrilly to the washing of the seas ?
I am a man, and these but beasts, but thou

Giving these souls, that all were men ere now
Shall be a very God and not a man ! ' 100

So spake he : but his fingers Orpheus ran
Over the strings, and sighing turned away
From that fair ending of the sunny bay ;
But as his well-skilled hands were preluding
What his heart swelled with, they began to sing
With pleading voices from the yellow sands,
Clustered together. with appealing hands
Reached out to Argo as she turned away,
While o'er their white limbs flew the flakes of spray, 110
Since they spared not to set white feet among
The cold waves heedless of their honied song.

Sweetly they sang, and still the answer came
Piercing and clear from him, as bursts the flame
From out the furnace in the moonless night ;
Yet, as their words are no more known aright
Through lapse of many ages, and no man
Can any more across the waters wan
Behold those singing women of the sea,
Once more I pray you all to pardon me, 120
If with my feeble voice and harsh I sing
From what dim memories may chance to cling
About men's hearts, of lovely things once sung
Beside the sea, while yet the world was young.

THE SIRENS.

Come to the land where none grows old,
And none is rash or over-bold,
Nor any noise there is or war,
Or rumour from wild lands afar,
Or plagues, or birth and death of kings ;
No vain desire of unknown things 130
Shall vex you there, no hope or fear
Of that which never draweth near ;

But in that lovely land and still
Ye may remember what ye will,
And what ye will, forget for aye.

So while the kingdoms pass away,
Ye sea-beat hardened toilers erst,
Unresting, for vain fame athirst,
Shall be at peace for evermore,
With hearts fulfilled of Godlike lore,
And calm, unwavering Godlike love,
No lapse of time can turn or move.
There, ages after your fair fleece
Is clean forgotten, yea, and Greece
Is no more counted glorious,
Alone with us, alone with us,
Alone with us, dwell happily,
Beneath our trembling roof of sea.

140

ORPHEUS.

Ah ! do ye weary of the strife
And long to change this eager life
For shadowy and dull hopelessness,
Thinking indeed to gain no less
Than far from this grey light to lie,
And there to die and not to die,
To be as if ye ne'er had been,
Yet keep your memory fresh and green,
To have no thought of good or ill,
Yet feed your fill of pleasure still ?
O idle dream ! Ah, verily
If it shall happen unto me
That I have thought of anything,
When o'er my bones the sea-fowl sing,
And I lie dead, how shall I pine
For those fresh joys that once were mine,
On this green fount of joy and mirth,

150

160

The ever young and glorious earth !
 Then, helpless, shall I call to mind
 Thoughts of the sweet flower-scented wind,
 The dew, the gentle rain at night,
 The wonder-working snow and white, 170
 The song of birds, the water's fall,
 The sun that maketh bliss of all ;
 Yea, this our toil and victory,
 The tyrannous and conquered sea.

THE SIRENS.

Ah, will ye go, and whither then
 Will ye go from us, soon to die,
 To fill your three-score years and ten,
 With many an unnamed misery ?
 And this the wretchedest of all,
 That when upon your lonely eyes 180
 The last faint heaviness shall fall
 Ye shall bethink you of our cries.
 Come back, nor grown old seek in vain
 To hear us sing across the sea.
 Come back, come back, come back again,
 Come back, O fearful Minyæ !

ORPHEUS.

Ah, once again, ah, once again,
 The black prow plunges through the sea,
 Nor yet shall all your toil be vain,
 Nor ye forgot, O Minyæ. 190

In such wise sang the Thracian, in such wise
 Out gushed the Sirens' deadly melodies ;

But long before the mingled song was done,
Back to the oars the Minyæ, one by one,
Slunk silently ; though many an one sighed sore,
As his strong fingers met the wood once more,
And from his breast the toilsome breathing came.

But as they laboured, some for very shame
Hung down their heads, and yet amongst them some
Gazed at the place whence that sweet song had come ; 200
But round the oars and Argo's shielded side
The sea grew white, and she began to glide
Swift through the waters of that deadly bay ;
But when a long wake now behind her lay,
And still the whistle of the wind increased,
Past shroud and mast, and all the song had ceased,
Butes rose up, the fair Athenian man,
And with wild eyes betwixt the rowers ran
Unto the poop and leapt into the sea ;
Then all men rested on their oars, but he
Rose to the top, and towards the shore swam fast,
While all eyes watched him ; who had well-nigh past
The place where sand and water 'gan to meet
In wreaths and ripples round the ivory feet,
When sun-burnt swimmer, snow-white glancing limb,
And yellow sand unto their eyes grew dim,
Nor did they see their fellow any more.

Leaving those deadly sands far astern, the Argonauts turned towards the south, and for two days traversed a landless sea. But on the morrow they sighted land again, and there they saw a place lovely beyond compare. Fenced round about with a marble wall stood a fair garden, wherein grew all manner of fruits and flowers in rich abundance, and beasts of all kinds roamed and disported themselves in happy contentment. In the midst was a marble terrace encircled by a clear blue stream, and o'er-topping all a wondrous tree hung with golden apples and guarded by a sleepless dragon.

And there were the daughters of Hesperus, the wise Hesperides, four damsels very fair to look upon. Two lay upon the daisied sward, a third sat on the terrace steps and combed out her hair, and one was bathing in the stream. This last descried the Argo, and, hastily doing on her raiment of gold, rose and warned her sisters ; and all four joined hands about the tree, singing the while. As the heroes gazed with wonderment and longing at that blissful scene, they were warned by Medea that such happiness was beyond the reach of all save the immortal gods. Though loth to go, they drew away, and turned their prow toward the north.

In two days they made a headland, high and blue, which Erginus knew to be Cape Malea. They cast anchor, and having landed, did all in accordance with Circe's behests. (Book XIV, 456-end.)

XII. THE RETURN TO IOLCHOS

From Malea they passed into the islanded sea they knew so well ; nor was it long before Eubœa was reached, and they had swept through the perilous straits into the bay of Pagasæ. There they disguised the Argo to look like some old and weathered merchantman ; and when they arrived off the shores of the island Cicynethus, they ran her aground and concealed her cunningly with leafy saplings from the woods near by. They rowed Medea in a shallop to the mainland, and she took leave of Jason and bade him keep close watch for a sign.

In the dark shade of a wood Medea cast aside her fair robes for a peasant's cloak, and by her art transformed herself into an aged ill-favoured crone. She made her way to the city, and, giving out that she possessed the secret of eternal youth, was brought before King Pelias' daughters and thence into the presence of the king himself. Pelias

believed that Jason and his companions had perished and, having made an end of Æson, thought that now there lived no one to dispute his sway. But as old age crept upon him, he grew uneasy and feared to die. Now when he heard Medea's claim that she could make him young once more, he was strangely stirred, and vowed that if it might so come to pass he would forsake his life of treachery and play the tyrant no more. Wherefore he bade his daughters do whatsoever she might bid them, so that the miracle might be wrought.

To prove her words, Medea first resumed the radiant loveliness of youth, and then bade the daughters of the king bring to a dark wood at dead of night an aged ram and a brazen cauldron and put them by a running stream. Thither Medea came, and set them to fill the cauldron with water from the stream, and to place it on a pile of dry twigs. The fire was kindled, and Medea sprinkled upon the water dried herbs from out her wallet. Then she bade them slay the ram and scatter his limbs piecemeal in the seething mixture, and uttered a prayer to Hecate. Whereat the lightning leapt forth, and the thunder crashed, and rain fell in torrents. Presently it ceased, and the daughters of Pelias drew near and saw amid the half-charred embers a new-born lamb all fair and white. "In such wise," said Medea, "must your hands do unto the king that he may be new-born."

So on the sixth morn she gave them her dread commands. "To-night," she said, "must ye steal away to the old deserted temple o'erlooking the bay, and build a pyre of dry brands, and set a huge cauldron upon it. This done, go ye to the palace and mix with Pelias' wine and the wine of his servants this drug that bringeth sleep."

And at midnight, when they had done her bidding, they came and brought her to the temple, and shewed her the pyre and cauldron all prepared. Then they stole away to where Pelias slept, and casting fear and pity aside drew their sharp-edged blades and ended his old life. They threw a pall about

his body, and with beating hearts and halting steps bore it to the temple and laid it by the cauldron's side. When Medea saw it was indeed the body of Pelias, scarce withholding a shout of triumph she plucked a blazing torch, and kindled the pyre therewith, and, waving back the shuddering girls, cast on it something like unto incense. Forthwith shot up a smokeless flame all red and quivering, and Medea, gazing out across the bay, cried aloud to her lover, "Come, conquering king, and sit upon thy father's seat!" (Book XV.)

The watchers on the woody shore of Cicynethus saw the blaze, and straightway Jason put the Argo to sea and made for Iolchos. Meantime the daughters of Pelias, well-nigh frenzied with despair, besought Medea to have pity and to restore to new life the victim of their impious deed. But Medea heeded them not. Presently she heard the grating of the Argo's keel upon the sand, and ran swiftly down to meet her lover, and bade the heroes hie them to the temple to witness the fate of hapless Pelias. Then all with joyous shouts made their way to the market-place, carrying the Golden Fleece strung high upon an oar for all to behold, and bearing aloft the fair Medea upon cushions laid across the staves of their spears, and Jason marched unarmed at the head. (Book XVI, 1-244.)

Now, therefore, when the gates were open wide,
Shouting, the folk drew back on either side,
All wild with joy; but when they did behold
The high-raised Fleece of curling ruddy gold,
And the glad heroes' mighty heads beneath,
And throned Medea, with her golden wreath,
And folded hands, and chiefest thing of all,
The godlike man who went beside the pall,
Whereon the body of their tyrant lay,
Then did their voices fail them on that day,
And many a man of weeping there was fain.

10

At last did Jason set his foot again

Upon the steps of that same ivory throne
Where once he fronted Pelias all alone,
And bare of friends : but now he turned about,
And, 'mid the thunder of the people's shout,
Scarce heard his fellows' spears : and by his side
There stood his gold-adorned Colchian bride,
With glad tears glistening in her sweet grey eyes :
And dead, at end of foiled treacheries, 20
There lay his foe, the slayer of his kin.

Then did he clasp the hand that lay within
His mighty and sword-hardened fingers brown,
And cried aloud above the shouting town :—

' Tell me, O people of my father's land,
Before whose ivory well-wrought throne I stand,
And whose fair-towered house mine eyes behold,
Glittering with brazen pillars, rich with gold !

' A while ago we sailed across the sea,
To meet our deaths, if so the thing must be, 30
And there had died, had not the kind Gods been,
Who sent to us this lovely Colchian queen
To be our helper : many a land we saw
That knoweth neither tongue of man, or law
Of God or man : oft most things did we lack
That most men have, as still we struggled back
Unto the soft wind and the Grecian sea,
Until this morn our keel triumphantly
Furrowed the green waves of the well-known bay.
There to yon palace did I take my way, 40
As one who thought his father's face to see ;
Yet landing on the green shore warily,
(Since times may change, and friendship come to nought)
To this dead man straightway my feet were brought,
Whose face I knew, the face of Pelias.

' Then still more warily thence did we pass,

Till we met folk who told us everything,
Both of the slaying of the godlike king,
Æson, my father, and of other folk,
And how the whole land groaned beneath the yoke 50
Of this dead man, whom sure the Gods have slain
That all our labour might not be in vain,
Nor we, safe passing through the deadly land,
Lie slain in our own country at his hand.
So have the Gods wrought, therefore am I here,
No shield upon mine arm, no glittering spear
In my right hand, but by my unarmed side
This Colchian Queen, by many sorrows tried.
Therefore, no fear of you is in my heart,
And if ye will, henceforth will I depart, 60
Nor take mine own ; or if it please this town
To slay me, let them lay my dead corpse down,
As on his tomb my father's image lies,
Like what he was before these miseries
Fell on his head. But in no wise will I
Take seat beneath this golden canopy,
Before ye tell me, people of this land,
Whose throne this is before the which I stand,
Whose towered house this is mine eyes behold,
Girt round with brazen pillars, bright with gold.' 70

Then, ere he ceased, the people's shouts broke in
Upon his speech : ' Most glorious of thy kin !
Be thou our king—be thou our king alone,
That we may think the age of iron gone,
And Saturn come with every peaceful thing :—
Jason for king ! the Conqueror for king ! '

Therewith the heroes clashed their spears and shields,
And as within the many-flowered fresh fields
This way and that the slim-stalked flowers do bend,
When sweeping gusts the soft west wind doth send 80
Among their hosts, so moved the people then,

When ceased the shouting of the armed men.
For each unto the other 'gan to speak,
And o'er the tall men's heads some dame would seek
To raise her child to look upon the king.
And as with smiles and laughter many a thing
They chattered through the great square joyously,
Each careless what his neighbour's words might be,
It sounded like some February mead,
Where thick the lustred starlings creep and feed, 90
And each his own song sings unto his mate,
Chiding the fickle spring so cold and late.

But through the happy clamour of the folk,
At Jason's bidding, the great trumpet broke,
And great Echion's voice rang clear and strong,
As he cried silence ; then across the throng,
Did Jason cry : ' O people, thanked be ye,
That in such wise ye give yourselves to me.
And now, O friends, what more is there to say
But this ? Be glad, and feast this happy day, 100
Nor spend one coin of all your store for this ;
Nor shall the altars of the high Gods miss
Their due thankoffering : and She chief of all,
Who caused that this same happy time should fall,
Shall have a tithe of all that 'longs to me.

' And ye, O loved companions o'er the sea,
Come to my golden house, and let us feast,
Nor let time weary us this night at least ;
O ! be so glad that this our happy day
For all times past, all times to come may pay.' 10

He ceased, and one more shout the people sent
Up to the heavens, as he descending went
With the fair Colchian through the joyous folk,
From whose well-ordered lane at times there broke
Some little child, thrust forward well to see
The godlike leader of the Minyæ :
Or here and there forth would some young man lean

To gaze upon the beauty of the queen
A little nearer, as they passed him by.

In such wise triumphantly they went from temple unto temple, and paid due honour to the gods and to Juno, chiefest of all. Thence Jason went to his father's tomb, and found him laid in a lone unkingly grave, and straightway gave orders that a new tomb be built close to the murmuring sea, befitting his royalty. Then to the palace, where in the hall once more the heroes gathered as they had done on the eve ere the quest began. On the morn great games were held in Æson's honour, and, these being done, the heroes, laden with priceless gifts, departed homewards unto many lands. (Book XVI, 364-455.)

And now is Jason mighty lord and king, 129
And wedded to the fairest queen on earth,
And with no trouble now to break his mirth ;
And, loved by all, lives happy, free from blame,
Nor less has won the promised meed of fame.
So, having everything he once desired
Within the wild, ere yet his heart was fired
By Juno's word, he lives an envied man,
Holding these things that scarce another can,
Ease, love, and fame, and youth that knows no dread
Of any horrors lurking far ahead 130
Across the sunny, flowered fields of life :—
—Youth seeing no end unto the joyous strife.

And thus in happy days, and rest, and peace,
Here ends the winning of the Golden Fleece.

XIII. JASON AT CORINTH—THE DEATH OF GLAUCE

TEN years have passed, since in the market-place
The hero stood with flushed and conquering face,

And life before him like one happy day ;
But many an hour thereof has passed away
In mingled trouble and felicity.

And now at Corinth, kissed by either sea,
He dwells, not governed now or governing,
Since there his kinsman Creon is a king.

And with him still abides the Colchian,
But little changed, since o'er the waters wan 10
She gazed upon the mountains that she knew
Still lessening as the plunging Argo flew
Over the billows on the way to Greece.

But in these ten sweet years of rest and peace
Two fair man-children has she borne to him,
Who, joyous, fair of face, and strong of limb,
Full oft shall hear the glorious story told
Of Argo and the well-won Fleece of Gold,
By some old mariner ; and oft shall go
Where nigh the sea the wind-swept beech-trees grow, 20
And with a grey old woman tending them,
Shall make an *Æa* of some beech-tree's stem,
About whose roots there stands the water black.
Nor of the fleece shall they have any lack,
For in the bushes hangs much tangled wool
From wandering sheep who seek the shadow cool ;
And for the dragon shall there be thereby
A many-coloured snake, with glazed dull eye,
Slain by the shepherd ; so shall pass their days,
Whom folk look soon to gather wealth and praise. 30

And 'midst these living things has Argo found
A home here also ; on the spot of ground
'Twixt Neptune's temple and the eastern sea,
She looks across the waves unceasingly ;
And as their ridges draw on toward the land,
The wind tells stories of the kingly band.
There, with the fixed and unused oars spread out
She lies, amidst the ghosts of song and shout,

And merry laughter, that were wont to fill
Her well-built hollow, slowly dying still, 40
Like all that glorious company of kings
Who in her did such well-remembered things.

But as the day comes round when o'er the seas
She darted 'twixt the blue Symplegades,
And when again she rushed across the bar,
With King Æetes following her afar,
And when at length the heroes laid adown
The well-worn oars at old King Æson's town,—
When, year by year, these glorious days came round,
Bright with gay garments was that spot of ground, 50
And the grey rocks that o'ertop Cenchræ
Sent echoes of sweet singing o'er the sea.

For then the keel the maidens went about
Singing the songs of Orpheus, and the shout
Of rough-voiced sea-folk ended every song ;
And then from stem to stern they hung along
Garlands of flowers, and all the oars did twine
With garlands too, and cups of royal wine
Cast o'er her stem ; and at the stern a maid,
Clad like to Juno, on the tiller laid 60
Her slender fingers, while anigh the stem
Stood one with wings, and many-coloured hem
About her raiment, like the messenger
Who bears the high Gods' dreadful words with her,
And through the sea of old that stem did lead.

Lo, in such wise they honoured that great deed,
But Jason did they reverence as a God ;
And though his kinsman bore the ivory rod
And golden circlet, little could he do
Unless the great Thessalian willed it too. 70

Therefore, seeing that after him his people would have
none other than Jason for their king, Creon designed how

he might marry Jason to his daughter Glauce. By subtle hints he contrived to poison Jason's ear against Medea ; and thinking that his scheme would go aright if once he brought him face to face with Glauce, he laid a crafty plot. At that time Glauce dwelt in the woods near Cleonæ, where was a shrine of Juno whose handmaiden she was ; and on a day, when hunting in those woods, by seeming chance he and Jason, as the night began to fall, found themselves alone and far from their attendants in the chase. Then Creon said, " We will repair to a cottage of mine hard by, where dwells my daughter Glauce, and there pass the night in comfort." Thither they went, and Glauce spread her board with such humble cheer as she possessed, and waited on them while they ate and drank. Then Creon filled a wine-cup, and bade his daughter bear it to Jason, and ask him to tell for her the story of the Quest. And when Jason took the cup from her fair hands, his heart was captured with the maiden's loveliness, even as it had been that night in Æetes' hall long years ago when first he gazed upon Medea.

Thenceforward he burned with fierce desire for his new-found love. As time wore on he tired of Medea and, though full oft his conscience pricked him sore when he bethought him of her constancy and how he owed to her his very life, yet his new passion soon silenced his qualms. Then came the fateful day when all the city held high festival in honour of Venus ; and Jason, forgetting all else in the rapture of meeting Glauce, threw his old love to the winds and wooed and won her for his bride. And Creon, seeing his deep-laid schemes bear fruit as he wished, was glad, and gave a day on which they twain should wed. (Book XVII, 95-721.)

Meanwhile, the once-loved sharer of his bed
Knew all at last, and fierce tormenting fire
Consumed her as the dreadful day drew nigher,
And much from other lips than his she heard,
Till, on a day, this dreadful, blighting word

Her eyes beheld within a fair scroll writ,
And 'twixt her closed teeth still she muttered it :
 ' Depart in peace ! and take great heaps of gold,
For nevermore thy body will I fold
Within these arms. Let Gods wed Goddesses 80
And sea-folk wed the women of the seas,
And men wed women ; but thee, who can wed
And dwell with thee without consuming dread,
O wise kin of the dreadful sorceress ?
And yet, perchance thy beauty still may bless
Some man to whom the world seems small and poor,
And who already stands beside his door,
Armed for the conquest of all earthly things.

 ' Lo, such an one, the vanquisher of kings
And equal to the Gods, should be thy mate. 90
But me, who for a peaceful end but wait,
Desiring nought but love—canst thou love me ?
Or can I give my whole heart up to thee ?

 ' I hear thee talk of old days thou didst know—
Are they not gone ?—wilt thou not let them go,
Nor to their shadows still cling desperately,
Longing for things that never more can be ?

 ' What ! wilt thou blame me still that the times change ?
Once through the oak-wood happy did I range,
And thought no ill ; but then came over me 100
Madness, I know not why, and o'er the sea
I needs must go in strife to win me fame,
And certes won it, and my envied name
Was borne with shouts about the towns of Greece.

 ' All that has vanished now, and my old peace,
Through lapse of changing years, has come to me.
Once more I seem the woodland paths to see,
Tunes of old songs are ringing in mine ears,
Heard long ago in that place free from fears,
Where no one wept above his fellow dead, 110
And looked at death himself with little dread.

The times are changed, with them is changed my heart,
Nor in my life canst thou have any part,
Nor can I live in joy and peace with thee,
Nor yet, for all thy words, canst thou love me.

‘ Yet, is the world so narrow for us twain
That all our life henceforth must be but vain ?
Nay, for departing shalt thou be a queen
Of some great world, fairer than I have seen,
And wheresoe’er thou goest shalt thou fare
As one for whom the Gods have utmost care.’ 120

Yea, she knew all ; yet when these words she read,
She felt as though upon her bowed-down head
Had fallen a misery not known before,
And all seemed light that erst her crushed heart bore,
For she was wrapped in uttermost despair,
And motionless within the chamber fair
She stood, as one struck dead and past all thought.

But as she stood, a sound to her was brought
Of children’s voices, and she ’gan to wail. 130
With tearless eyes, and, from writhed lips and pale,
Faint words of woe she muttered, meaningless,
But such as such lips utter none the less.
Then all at once thoughts of some dreadful thing
Back to her mind some memory seemed to bring,
As she beheld the casket gleaming fair,
Wherein was laid that she was wont to wear,
That in the philtre lay that other morn,
And therewithal unto her heart was borne
The image of two lovers, side by side. 140

Then with a groan the fingers that did hide
Her tortured face slowly she drew away,
And going up to where her tablets lay,
Fit for the white hands of the Goddesses,
Therein she wrôte such piteous words as these.

' Would God that Argo's brazen-banded mast
' Twixt the blue clashing rocks had never passed
Unto the Colchian land ! Or would that I
Had had such happy fortune as to die
Then, when I saw thee standing by the Fleece, 150
Safe on the long-desired shore of Greece !
Alas, O Jason ! for thy cruel praise !
Alas, for all the kindness of past days !
That to thy heart seems but a story told
Which happed to other folk in times of old.
But unto me, indeed, its memory
Was bliss in happy hours, and now shall be
Such misery as never tongue can tell.

' Jason, I heed thy cruel message well,
Nor will I stay to vex thee, nor will stay 160
Until thy slaves thrust me thy love away.
Be happy ! think that I have never been—
Forget these eyes, that none the less have seen
Thy hands take life at my hands, and thy heart
O'erflow in tears. when needs was we should part
But for a little ; though, upon the day
When I for evermore must go away,
I think, indeed, thou wilt not weep for this ;
Yea, if thou weepest then, some honied kiss
From other lips shall make thy grey eyes wet, 170
Betwixt the words that bid thee to forget
Thou ever hast loved aught but her alone.

' Yet of all times mayst thou remember one,
The second time that ever thou and I
Had met alone together—mournfully
The soft wind murmured on that happy night ;
The round moon, growing low, was large and bright,
As on my father's marble house it gleamed ;
While from the fane a baneful light outstreamed,
Lighting the horror of that prodigy, 180
The only fence betwixt whose wrath and thee

Was this poor body. Ah ! thou knowest then
How thou beheldst the shadows of thy men
Steal silently towards Argo's painted head.
Thou knowest yet the whispered words I said
Upon that night—thou never canst forget
That happy night of all nights. Ah ! and yet
Why make I these long words, that thou the more
Mayst hate me, who already hat'st me sore,
Since 'midst thy pleasure I am grown a pain.

190

' Be happy ! for thou shalt not hear again
My voice, and with one word this scroll is done—
Jason, I love thee, yea, love thee alone—

' All would I do, that I have done erewhile,
To have thy love once more, and feel thy smile
As freed from snow about the first spring days
The meadows feel the young sun's fickle rays.

' But I am weak, and past all, nor will I
Pray any more for kindly memory ;
Yet shalt thou have one last gift more from me,
To give thy new love, since men say that she
Is fairer than all things man can behold.

200

' Within this casket lies in many a fold
Raiment that my forgotten limbs did press,
When thou wert wont to praise their loveliness.
Fear not to take it from the sorceress' hands,
Though certainly with balms from many lands
Is it made fragrant, wondrous with a charm
To guard the wearer's body from all harm.

' Upon the morn that she shall make thee glad,
With this fair tunic let her limbs be clad ;
But see that no sun falls upon its folds
Until her hand the king, her father, holds,
To greet thine eyes : then, when in godlike light
She shines, with all her beauty grown so bright,
That eyes of men can scarcely gaze thereon—
Then, when thy new desire at last is won—

210

Then, wilt thou not a little think of me,
Who saved thy life for this felicity ?'

But Jason, when he read that bitter word 220
Was sore ashamed, and in his ears he heard
Words that men durst not speak before his face ;
Therewith, for very shame, that silver case
And what it held he sent unto his bride,
And therewithal this word : ' Whatso betide,
Let not the sun shine on it till the hour
When thou hast left for aye thy maiden bower,
And with the king thou standest in the hall,
Then unto thee shall all good things befall.'

So to his rest he went, but, sooth to say, 230
He slept but little till the dawn of day,
So troubled was his mind with many a thing,
And in his ears long-spoken words did ring.
' Good speed, O traitor ! who shall think to wed
Soft limbs and white, and find thy royal bed
Dripping with blood and burning up with fire.'

So there, 'twixt fear and shame and strong desire,
Sleepless he lay until the day began—
The conqueror, the king, the envied man.

But on the chamber where sweet Glauce lay, 240
Fair broke the dawning of that dreadful day,
And fairer from her bed did she arise,
And looking down with shamefast timid eyes,
Beheld the bosom that no man had seen,
And round limbs worthy of the Sea-born Queen.
With that she murmured words of joy and love,
No louder than the grey, pink-footed dove,
When at the dawn he first begins his tale,
Not knowing if he means a song or wail.

Then soon her maidens came, and every rite 250
That was the due of that slim body white,

They wrought with careful hands ; and last they took
Medea's gift, and all the folds outshook,
And in a cool room looking toward the north,
They clad the queen therewith, nor brought her forth
Till over all a gold cloak they had laid.
Then to King Creon did they bring the maid,
Rejoicing in the greatness of her love,
Which well she thought no lapse of time could move,
And on the dais of the royal hall
They waited till the hour should befall
When Jason and his friends would bear her thence
With gentle rape and tender violence,
As then the manner was ; and the old king
Sat there beside her, glad at every thing.

260

Meanwhile the people thronged in every way,
Clad in gay weed, rejoicing for that day,
Since that their lords had bidden them rejoice ;
And in the streets was many a jocund voice,
That carolled to the honour of the twain
Who on that day such blissful life should gain.

270

But Jason set out from his pillared house,
Clad in rich raiment, fair and amorous,
Forgetful of the troubles of the night,
Nor thinking more of that impending blight,
Nor those ill words the harpies spoke of old,
As with his fellows, glittering with gold,
Towards Creon's palace did he take his way,
To meet the bride that he should wed that day.

But in the hall the pillars one by one
Had barred the pathway of the travelling sun,
As toward the west he turned, and now at last
Upon the dais were his hot rays cast,
As they within heard the glad minstrelsy
Of Jason to his loved one drawing nigh.

280

Then Creon took fair Glauce by the hand,
And round about her did her damsels stand,

Making a ring 'gainst that sweet violence,
That soon should bear their lovely mistress thence.
While Glauce, trembling with her shamefast joy, 290
With the gold mantle's clasp began to toy,
Eager to cast that covering off, and feel
The hero's mighty arms about her steal.

Meanwhile, her lover through the court had passed,
And at the open door he stood at last,
Amidst his friends, and looking thence, he saw
The white arms of the damsels round her draw
A wall soon to be broken ; but her face
Over their flower-crowned heads made glad the place :
Giddy with joy one moment did he gaze 300
And saw his love her slender fingers raise
Unto the mantle's clasp—the next the hall
Was filled with darting flames from wall to wall,
And bitter screams rang out, as here and there,
Scorched, and with outspread arms, the damsels fair
Rushed through the hall ; but swiftly Jason ran,
Grown in one moment like an old worn man,
Up to the daïs, whence one bitter cry
He heard, of one in utmost agony,
Calling upon his once so helpful name. 310
But when unto the fiery place he came,
Nought saw he but the flickering tongues of fire
That up the wall were climbing high and higher
And on the floor a heap of ashes white,
The remnant of his once beloved delight,
For whom his ancient love he cast away,
And of her sire who brought about that day.

Then he began to know what he had done,
And madly through the palace did he run,
Calling on Glauce, mingling with her name 320
The name of her that brought him unto fame,
Colchian Medea, who, for her reward,

Had lonely life made terrible and hard,
By love cast back, within her heart to grow,
To madness and the vengeance wrought out now ;
But as about the burning place he ran,
Full many a maid he met and pale-faced man,
Wild with their terror, knowing not what end
That which their eyes had seen might yet portend :
But these shrunk backward from his brandished sword,
And open shouting mouth, and frenzied word, 331
As still from chamber unto chamber fair
He rushed, scarce knowing what he sought for there,
Nor where he went, till his unresting feet
Had borne him out at last into the street,
Where armed and unarmed people stood to gaze
On Creon's palace that began to blaze
From every window out into the air,
With strange light making pale that noontide fair.

XIV. THE DEATH OF JASON

CREON now being slain,
And Corinth kingless, every man was fain,
Remembering Jason's wisdom and sharp sword,
To have the hero for their king and lord.
So on his weary brows they set the crown,
And he began to rule that noble town.
And 'midst all things, somewhat his misery
Was dulled unto him, as the days went by,
And he began again to cast his eyes
On lovely things, and hope began to rise 10
Once more within his heart.

But on a day
From out the goodly town he took his way,
To where, beneath the cliffs of Cenchreæ,

Lay Argo, looking o'er the ridgy sea,
Being fain once more to ponder o'er past days,
Ere he should set his face to winning praise
Among the shouts of men and clash of steel.

But when he reached the well-remembered keel,
The sun was far upon his downward way,
At afternoon of a bright summer day. 20
Hot was it, and still o'er the long rank grass,
Beneath the hull, a widening shade did pass ;
And further off, the sunny daisied sward,
The raised oars with their creeping shadows barred ;
And grey shade from the hills of Cenchreæ
Began to move on toward the heaving sea.

So Jason, lying in the shadow dark
Cast by the stem, the warble of the lark,
The chirrup of the cricket, well could hear ;
And now and then the sound would come anear 30
Of some hind shouting o'er his laden wain.
But looking o'er the blue and heaving plain,
Sailless it was, and beaten by no oar,
And on the yellow edges of the shore
The ripple fell in murmur soft and low,
As with wide-sweeping wings the gulls did go
About the breakers crying plaintively.

But Jason, looking out across the sea,
Beheld the signs of wind a-drawing nigh,
Gathering about the clear cold eastern sky ; 40
And many an evening then he thought upon
Ere yet the quays of Æa they had won,
And longings that had long been gathering
Stirred in his heart ; and now he felt the sting
Of life within him, and at last he said :—
' Why should I move about as move the dead,
And take no heed of what all men desire?
Once more I feel within my heart the fire
That drave me forth unto the white-walled town,

So 'midst all this at last he fell asleep,
Nor did his eyes behold another day ;
For Argo, slowly rotting all away,
Had dropped a timber here, and there an oar,
All through that year, but people of the shore
Set all again in order as it fell ;
But now the stempost, that had carried well,
The second rafter in King Pelias' hall,
Began at last to quiver towards its fall,
And whether loosed by some divinity,
Or that the rising wind from off the sea
Blew full upon it, surely I know not—
But, when the day dawned, still on the same spot,
Beneath the ruined stem did Jason lie
Crushed, and all dead of him that here can die.

What more ?—Some shepherd of the lone grey slope,
Drawn to the sandy sea-beach by the hope
Of trapping quick-eared rabbits, found him there,
And running back, called from the vineyards fair
Vine-dressers and their mates who through the town
Ere then had borne their well-filled baskets brown. 90
These, looking on his dead face, straightway knew
This was the king that all men kneeled unto,
Who dwelt between the seas ; therefore they made
A bier of white-thorn boughs, and thereon laid
The dead man, straightening every drawn-up limb ;
And, casting flowers and green leaves over him,
They bore him unto Corinth, where the folk,
When they knew all, into loud wailing broke,
Calling him mighty hero, crown of kings.

But him ere long to where the sea-wind sings 100
O'er the grey hill-side did they bear again.
And there, where he had hoped that hope in vain,
They laid him in a marble tomb carved fair
With histories of his mighty deeds ; and there
Such games as once he loved yet being alive,
They held for ten days, and withal did give
Gifts to the Gods with many a sacrifice ;
But chiefest, among all the things of price,
Argo they offered to the Deity
Who shakes the hard earth with the rolling sea. 110

And now is all that ancient story told
Of him who won the guarded Fleece of Gold.

QUESTIONS

I.

Line.

15. Explain the phrase 'to bay.' What does 'bay' mean as a verb?
25. What does 'high' mean? Give other examples of this meaning.
26. Parse 'garland.'
32. What does 'or' mean?
40. Give other meanings of the noun 'rout.' What connection is there between 'rout' and 'route'?

II.

3. What is the modern equivalent of 'did on'? Give its opposite.
40. What part of speech is 'needs'? Analyse the sentence.
61. Parse 'clomb.'
- 91-93. Analyse 'for the latchet . . . to the sea.'
95. Explain the reference.
110. What does 'ban' mean as a noun?
121. Give derivation of 'uncouth.' In what modern phrase does 'weed' survive in this sense? Cf. XIII, 267.
122. Criticise this line.
147. Explain the reference here.
155. What is the usual modern meaning of 'bandy' as a verb? What is the connection between it and the adjective 'bandy'?
189. Parse 'fain.'
203. What other meanings has the noun 'press,' and what is the idea connecting them all?

III.

Line.

7. What is the force of the suffix in 'lordship' ? Give other examples.
12. What is the meaning of 'tide' in 'summer-tide' ?
Which is the older meaning—this or that current to-day ?
23. Is the 'local colour' at fault here ?
- 38-42. Comment on the tenses of the verbs.
61. Parse 'them.'
64. Explain construction of 'unwept of damsels.'
69. What is the force of the prefix in 'forlorn' ? Cf. V, 166.
73. Explain 'wingéd wish.'
85. Parse 'right.'
97. Why 'spotless' beasts ?
102. Who was 'the God' ?
113. What is the meaning of 'brand' here ? Give other meanings and show how they are connected.

Describe the scene which appears to you most reminiscent of mediaeval times.

What is a literary epithet ? Illustrate from the text.

Make a list of epithets applied by Morris to the sea.

In what ways would you say the description in III, 120-133 is peculiarly effective ?

What was the attitude of the Greeks toward the sea ? Account for it. Read the chapter on Greek mariners in Kinglake's *Eothen*.

IV.

3. Explain 'in goodly wise.' Give examples of 'wise' used as a suffix. What is the connection between 'wise' and 'guise' ?
20. Who was 'Alcmena's godlike son' ?
21. Explain 'half-halting.'
22. What do you know of the story of Polyphemus and Odysseus ?
25. Give the meaning of 'governed by some wayward star'.
Give other examples of metaphorical uses of astronomical terms.
30. Explain construction of 'haunted of.' Cf. III, 64.
36. Would 'down-swinging' be allowed in prose ? Give a reason. Here 'down-swing' means the same as 'swing down.' Give examples of adverb-verb compounds which

Line

have not the same meaning when the adverb is used separately after the verb (*e.g.* upset, set up).

41. Explain suffix in 'darksome.' Give other examples.
43. Why 'helpless' ?
51. What is the meaning here of 'outlandish' ? What is the modern meaning ? What was a 'Uitlander' ? Cf. IX, 284. Give examples of the different meanings of the adjectival suffix '-ish.'
53. Which is the older form, 'bide' or 'abide' ? What is the difference in meaning ?

How many lines in the first hundred of this passage consist of monosyllables only ? Is the prevalence of monosyllabic lines a merit or a defect in Morris' versification, or both ? Give reasons.

109. Morris uses 'wan' as an epithet of water innumerable times. Do you think it is an expressive epithet ? Is its constant use wearisome ? Give reasons. What position in the line does it usually occupy ? Does this suggest a reason for its frequent recurrence ?
150. Give prose equivalent of 'mindeth.'
151. Parse 'that.'
163. Give meaning and derivation of 'demon.'
173. Why does he call his arms 'toys' ?
206. What is the reference here ?
272. Compare the use of 'unused' here with that in VI, 102, and VIII, 166.

Give examples of Morris's fondness for the weak, unstressed final syllable. What English poet first used this metrical device to any extent ? Does Morris overdo it ?

V.

- 2, 7. What sea is referred to ? Why is it called 'ill' and 'evil' ? What did the Greeks call it and why ?
4. What is the prose equivalent of 'hardihead' ? Collect other examples of Morris's fondness for similar compounds. Are they false archaisms ?
6. Explain the grammar of 'needs must we go.'
17. Find two similes in the foregoing lines. Comment on their appropriateness.
- 35, 38. Scan these lines.
- 59, 60. What is the figure of speech used in these lines ?

Line

- 60, 62. What metrical device is used in these lines ?
97. Explain the reference.
102. What is the usual name given to these monsters ?
116. Comment on the formation of 'drouth.' What is the parallel form in prose ?
119. Who are the furies ?
120. Explain the reference.
121. What is this use of the word 'lucky' called ?
132. Give meaning and derivation of 'braveries.'
- 138-141. Analyse these lines.
144. There are many references in the above lines to Phineus' 'wisdom' and 'knowledge.' Tell his story shortly, and explain the cause of his visitation by the gods.
151. Who were the Northwind's offspring ?
166. What is the force of fore- and for- in compounds ? Did Morris mean 'forewearied' here ? Give a reason.
185. To whom does this line refer ?
- 188-196. How was this prophecy fulfilled ?
204. What is the meaning of 'foolish' here ? Can you justify its use in this sense ? If not, can you suggest any plausible reason why Morris should have written it ?
213. Is 'light' or 'alight' the correct form ? Give the past tenses and past participles of these verbs.

Illustrate Morris's fondness for compound epithets from the above passage.

Morris frequently uses the expletives 'do' and 'did.' Find instances in this passage. Is this use a merit or fault ? Give a reason.

VI.

3. Why 'gainful' ?
10. Parse 'nothing.'
21. Who were the 'giant's brood' ?
26. Give prose equivalent for 'at point.'
30. Give meaning and derivation of 'adamantine.'
34. Who was the 'herald' ?
40. What figure of speech is illustrated by this line ?
42. Comment on the phrase 'lingered out.'
59. Comment on this line.

Line.

- 86-94. What are the merits of this passage as a piece of *graphic* description ?
137. Parse 'good.'
141. What is 'woad' ?
144. What is the meaning of 'doubt us friends' ?
161. What does 'lightly' mean ? Cf. 214.
177. Who was the 'guest' ?
206. Explain 'lading.'

VII.

10. What figures of speech are illustrated by this line ? Give the history of the word 'pelf.'
17. Give the derivation and history of the word 'cunning.'
18. Give a synonym for 'foreshowing.'
24. Give meaning of 'presently.'
34. From what language do we get 'dais' ?
45. Why was Athamas 'unlucky' ?
59. What does 'acre' signify ?
60. Comment on the metre.
61. Is 'serpents' correct ?
62. Where was the 'sunless heath' ?
64. Parse 'nothing.'
65. Parse 'garner.'
- 95-99. Analyse.
102. Give derivation of 'reckless.' What is the plural of 'die' ?
106. Distinguish between 'loth,' 'loath' and 'loathe.'
107. Explain the figure of speech in 'honied pain.'
120. Give the meaning of 'withal.'
131. Give the meaning of 'apace.'
147. Explain 'gross and palpable.' Are they suitable words to use in verse ? Give reasons.
168. Give prose equivalent of 'whiles.'
177. What is the difference in meaning between 'damp' and 'dank' ?
188. What exactly does 'sullen' mean in reference to a fire ? Name the device which applies to inanimate objects epithets properly belonging to the emotions of conscious beings.
190. Give the literal and derived meanings of 'fret.'

Line.

196. Whom is Medea addressing? Account for the name 'Three-formed.' Cf. IX, 127-9.
- 196-203. Write a prose version of these lines.
214. What deeds are referred to?
225. Explain 'better at need.'
228. What does 'zone' mean here? Trace the connection between this and the modern prose use of the word.
230. Criticise the metre.
239. What island is referred to?
254. Is the prodelision defensible here? Give a reason.
306. Explain the reference and the significance of the epithets.
307. What does 'pin' mean?
314. What would be written in prose for 'abode'?
335. Notice here the correct use of 'awful.' What is the common incorrect use? Cf. VIII, 113.
346. What is the figure of speech here? Cf. 107.
355. What does 'score' mean here? What other meanings does it bear as a verb? Cf. X, 240.
359. Give meaning and derivation of 'whit.'
360. What does 'virtue' mean here? Give other examples of similar uses in English literature. Cf. VIII, 465.
364. Is 'or' correct or should it be 'nor'? Give a reason.
368. In what sense is 'horrid' used here? Give derivation.
386. What special significance has the number seven?
388. What is 'keel' used for here? What is this device called? Give other examples.
421. Give the meaning of 'lists.'
452. Explain 'instant.'

Give examples from this book of Morris's inventive fertility.

'Morris's verse is characterised by lack of elision and absence of syllables of natural metrical weight.' Choose any fifty consecutive lines in this book, and prove or disprove this estimate.

VIII.

5. What is the meaning of 'forthright'? Comment on its formation. Give other examples of the suffix -right in this sense.
10. What does 'pall' mean here? What is the modern meaning? Give other examples of words which at first had

Line

general meanings and which are now restricted in their application.

20. What is meant by 'toy' ? Cf. IV, 173.
46. Parse 'dight' and give its meaning and that of 'close.'
55. Comment on the appropriateness of the adj. 'glassy.'
63. Give the meaning and derivation of 'monstrous.'
64. Why 'stupid' rage ?
67. What kind of a word would you call 'clangorous' ?
70. Parse 'but'
74. Where was 'the doubtful sea' ?
- 95, 96. Express simply in prose.
109. What is meant by 'apart from his desire' ?
135. Find a previous reference to Anaurus. What is meant by 'on that other tide' ?
140. Give meaning and derivation of 'grisly.' Has it any connection with 'grizzly' ?
156. What does 'pain' mean here ? What word would be more appropriate in prose ?
169. What does 'fallow' mean here ? What is the usual meaning ? What is the modern form of 'loathly' ?
- 171-176. State in plain, unfigurative language what Jason means in these lines.
191. Comment on the form of 'unholpen.'
195. Give meaning and derivation of 'askance.'
202. What is the meaning of 'foil' here ? What other meanings does the word have ? Show the connection between them.
206. Give prose equivalent for 'spill.' Compare the meaning in VII, 22.
259. Comment on this line.
286. Comment on the form of 'foughten.' What does 'field' stand for ?
308. What is the figure of speech used here ?
309. Give derivation of 'doom.'
324. What does 'tide' mean here ? Cf. III, 12, and VIII, 135.
343. Explain 'satiated of fight.'
- 343-6. Paraphrase.
368. Explain the reference.
- 379-381. Express simply in prose.
446. Does this line jar upon the ear ? If so, why ?
457. Give meaning and derivation of 'sere-cloth.'

Collect and classify the similes in this book.

Find evidences of mediæval atmosphere in this book.

Describe the scene of the tasks from Medea's point of view, i.e. as she might have described it to a confidante.

IX.

Line

1. Give the meaning and derivation of 'precinct'.
42. What does 'ruth' mean?
50. Give the meaning of 'lank.'
76. Explain 'in thy despite.' Which is the older word, 'spite' or 'despite'?
92. Who was the 'God of Day'?
99. Who was the 'slim messenger'?
104. Why 'twice-washed'?
- 105, 7. Who were 'the dread Lord' and 'the flower-culling maid'?
158. What was the name of the 'brown bird'?
182. Give a prose synonym for 'meed.'
189. Explain 'far-babbled.'
- 212, 3. Explain the reference.
221. Explain 'stark'?
234. Why 'shielded'?
241. What does 'yare' mean?
242. Give the meaning of 'rack.' Is this the correct spelling, or should it be 'wreck'?
252. Give modern equivalent for 'reck.'
263. Who was Absyrtus?
289. What is meant by 'measured oars'?
338. What is the meaning of 'odds'? Explain how it comes to have this meaning.
357. Parse 'sharp.'
369. Comment on the form of 'unfoughten.'
383. What does 'pass' mean here?
422. Give the meaning and derivation of 'canopy.'
- 435, 6. What figure of speech is used here?

Describe one scene in the foregoing narrative which you think Morris has handled with especial skill. Give reasons for your choice.

Describe the departure of the Argo from the point of view of a Colchian warrior who is aroused from sleep by the sounding of the alarm.

In what details does Morris's version of the Argo's departure differ from the usually accepted version ?

'Morris amplifies his narrative with a wealth of circumstantial detail.' Illustrate this from the text and show how it affects our interest and pleasure in the story.

From the last three books what conclusions can you draw concerning Morris's own personal tastes or pursuits ?

X.

Line

6. Give meaning and derivation of 'rood.'
19. What figure of speech is illustrated here ?
25. Comment on the form of 'smit.'
29. Comment on the form of 'dured.'
34. What does 'bested' mean ? Parse it.
36. Why is her axe called 'amazonian' ?
41. Comment on the use and meaning of 'foiled.'
44. What would be written in prose for 'ward' ?
54. What would a prose writer put for 'drew glad breath' ?
59. What is meant by 'flayed' ?
71. Give a synonym for 'scouring.'
75. Give meaning and derivation of 'noisome.'
77. What is meant by 'from out' ? Give other examples of two prepositions used conjointly.
- 81, 2. Explain 'therefore . . . appease.'
91. Express by means of a simile.
- 104, 5. Explain the reference.
113. Give a prose synonym for 'voiceless.'
118. Where was 'the sunny bay' ?
124. What is meant by 'parts' ?
125. What is meant by 'striking the mast' ?
149. Explain 'pressed by the Grecian sea.'
176. What does 'luted' stand for ?
189. What have you to say about the expression 'soft tormenting' ?
192. Give a prose synonym for 'untimely.'
200. What does 'by main force' mean ?

Line.

202. Why 'hot' ?
204. 'Amber-bearing. What does this tell us of the whereabouts of this district ?
207. Give the meaning of 'lie-to.'
209. Explain the reference.
218. Why 'careless' ?
225. Who was 'the man' ?
239. Distinguish between 'scantly' and 'scantly.'
254. 'Green'—is this to be understood literally ?

Indicate by means of a sketch-map the route taken by the Argonauts on their homeward journey as far as the Pillars of Hercules. How far is this route Morris's own invention ?

XI.

15. Explain 'near-gained.'
25. Why 'orange-scented' ?
40. What is 'whin' ?
42. Who was Nereus ? What does 'scarped' mean ?
56. Where was the 'lion-haunted' land ?
57. Who was 'the Thracian' ?
- 75, 6. Express the sense, eliminating the metaphor.
81. Explain 'waist.'
83. What is meant by 'trim the sail' ?
84. Who was 'the Milesian man' ?
89. Explain the nautical term here.
93. Who was Orpheus' mother ?
- 120-124. Can you suggest any reason for this sudden intrusion of the first person ?
- 149-158. Paraphrase.
204. What does 'wake' mean ?
206. What is a 'shroud' ?
209. What part of a ship is the poop ?
215. Explain 'glancing.'
217. What happened to Butes ?

What is your estimate of Medea's character up to this point in the story ?

What do you know of Odysseus's experiences with the Sirens and Circe ?

XII.

Line

- 8. Compare the meaning of 'pall' here with that in VIII, 10.
- 14. What would be written in prose for 'fronted' ?
- 29-33. Analyse.
- 31. Explain 'had not the kind Gods been.'
- 46. Scan this line.
- 68. Comment on the presence of 'the' before 'which.'
- 74, 5. Explain the references.
- 77-92. Find two similes in this passage and comment on their appropriateness.
- 89. Distinguish between 'mead' and 'meed.'
- 103. Who is 'She' ?
- 105. What is the literal meaning of 'tithe' ?
- 109-110. Analyse.
- 126. What is meant by 'within the wild' ?

Describe the scene of Jason's acclamation in your own words.

By what means does Morris contrive to bring this scene vividly before our eyes ?

So far the career of Jason has been one of uninterrupted success ; fortune has smiled upon him at every turn. Yet if you look carefully you will find foreshadowings of a tragic ending. Where do they lie ?

XIII.

- 6. Explain 'kissed by either sea.'
- 30. Criticise the grammar of this line.
- 62. Why 'many-coloured' ?
- 84. Who was 'the dreadful sorceress' ?
- 103. What language is 'certes' ?
- 121. Summarise Jason's appeal in your own words.
- 138. Explain 'philtre.'
- 143. What are 'tablets' ?
- 152. Why does she call Jason's praise 'cruel' ?
- 161. Parse 'me.'
- 164. Explain the reference.
- 176. When was 'that happy night' ?
- 180. Explain 'prodigy.' What other meanings does it bear ?

Line

181. Explain 'fence.' Give the derivation.
184. Scan.
212. Why ? (see l. 225 *sqq.* and l. 254.)
- 203-219. Find examples of irony.
230. Give prose for 'sooth to say.'
- 234-236. Who spoke these words, and on what occasion ?
243. What does 'shamefast' mean ? Is 'shamefast' or 'shame-faced' the correct spelling ?
245. Who was 'the Sea-born Queen' ?
264. What was the custom ? How did it arise ?
288. Comment on the expression 'sweet violence.'
- 294-317. What are the merits of this passage as a piece of graphic description ?
- 322-325. 'Who . . . now.' Express simply in prose.

Revise and amplify your estimate of Medea's character in the light of the events in this book.

XIV.

21. What does 'rank' mean here ? Give an example of its use in a figurative sense.
31. What is a wain ? In what expression does it survive to-day ?
42. What is the meaning of 'won' here ?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Find evidences in these selections of Morris's love and intimate knowledge of Nature.
2. Does the medieval setting of *Jason* improve or spoil the story for modern readers? Give reasons.
3. 'Morris's poetry never rises to any great height, but is hardly ever trivial.' Criticise this view with references to the text.
4. Is a miraculous element essential to Romance? Consider this with reference to the part it plays in *Jason*.
5. Choose two scenes which appeal strongly to you, one from the pictorial, the other from the emotional point of view. Describe them in your own words and give reasons for your choice.
6. Compile a list of words, phrases and grammatical forms that are borrowed from Chaucer.
7. Is Morris's conscious imitation of Chaucer a merit or a defect or both? Give reasons.
8. Suggest some striking differences between *Jason* and the *Canterbury Tales*.
9. What is your estimate of Morris as a story-teller?
10. Write a character of Jason.
11. Who deserves our sympathy more, Medea or Jason? Give your reasons.
12. 'While Jason and Medea are working out their destinies as it were on a higher plane in company with gods and demi-gods, heroes and kings, Morris never forgets the common people with their hopes and fears, their simple pleasures and sorrows—emotions which touch a responsive chord in the hearts of mere mortals.' Explain and expand this statement, with special references to passages in the text which bear out its truth.
13. 'Men are but puppets of the gods.' Discuss this as a justifiable moral to the story.
14. Describe an incident in (a) Hakluyt's Voyages, or (b) Captain Scott's Antarctic Expedition, in the metre and style of *Jason*.
15. Compare Morris's treatment of the Heroic couplet in *Jason* with that of Dryden in *Absalom and Achitophel*, of Pope in the *Essay on Man* and of Keats in *Endymion*.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAIC WORDS

Adown · down, downwards
(cf. anear, angh).
athwart · across.
aumbrye : cupboard.

Bale-fire : beacon
bane : harm, destruction (adj.
baneful).
bent, n. : grass
best, vb. : press
busk, vb. : busy.

Cinnabar : vermilion.

Dight · arrayed
drouth : dryness, thirst.

Eld : age.
endlong : lengthways, along.
enow : enough.
erewhile : formerly.
erst : of old.

Fain : desirous.
fell, n. : hide.
fell, adj. : dread.
fillet : band.
flaw : squall

Gainful : profitable.
gobbet : lump.
grisly : fearful, horrible.
guerdon : reward.

Hardhead : hardihood (cf.
goodlihead, etc.).

hecetomb : sacrifice of a hun-
dred beasts.

Lordship : estate, demesne.
lore : learning.

Meed · reward.

Natheless : nevertheless.
neat : oxen.

Press, n. : crowd.

Quaggy · marshy.

Rack : driving clouds.
reck : care.
reft : bereft
rout : merry company.

Sedge : reeds.
sere-cloth · shroud.
shallop : skiff, dinghy.
shard : broken pottery.
soothly : truly.
stead : place.
stilt · handle.
sward : lawn.

Wain : waggon.
weed : clothes.
wrack : wreck, ruin.

GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Æa	a town in Colchis at the mouth of R. Phasis.
Æaea	location unknown : probably an island in the straits between Sicily and the toe of Italy.
Ætolia	a district in N. Greece W. of Thessaly.
Anaurus	a stream rising in Mt Pelion and flowing into the Gulf of Pagasæ.
Arcadia	a district in the centre of the Peloponnese.
Argos	a city in the N.E. of the Peloponnese.
Caria	a district in the S W. of Asia Minor.
Cenchrææ	one of the ports of Corinth.
Cimbria	modern Denmark.
Colchis	a district to the E. of the Black Sea S. of the Caucasus : modern Georgia.
Corinth	a city on the Isthmus joining N. Greece with the Peloponnese.
Cyzicum	a town on the S. coast of the Propontis or Sea of Marmora.
Dēlos	an island in the Ægean Sea.
Dodōna	in Epirus ; the seat of an oracle of Jupiter whose answers were interpreted from the rustle of the leaves in an oak-wood.
Enna	a town in the centre of Sicily.
Eubœa	a long narrow island off the E. coast of Northern Greece.
Hellespont	modern Dardanelles.
Heraclea	a town on the S. coast of the Black Sea.
Iolchos	a town in Thessaly on the Gulf of Pagasæ.
Ismēnus	a river in Bœotia, a district in Central Greece N.W. of Attica.
Lacedæmon	a district in the S.E. of the Peloponnese.
Lemnos	an island in the Ægean Sea, roughly half-way between the coast of Thessaly and the Dardanelles.
Magnesia	a district of Thessaly in which Mt. Pelion and Iolchos stand.
Malæa	the southernmost cape of the Peloponnese.
Miletus (adj. Milesian)	a town on the coast of Caria S.W. of Asia Minor.

Mysia	a district in the N.W. corner of Asia Minor.
Pelion	a high mountain-peak in Thessaly near the sea-coast.
Phæaciā	an island off Epirus—W. coast of Northern Greece.
Phasis	a river in Colchis.
Pontus	a district in N.E. Asia Minor on the S. coast of the Black Sea ; also used as equivalent to the Pontus Euxinus, <i>i.e.</i> the Black Sea.
Propontis	modern Sea of Marmora.
Salmydessus	a town in Thrace on the W. coast of the Black Sea ; wrongly imagined by W. Morris to be on the N. coast of the Propontis.
Strōphādes	small islands off the W. coast of the Peloponnese.
Stygian stream or Styx	one of the rivers of the lower world.
Symplēgādēs	generally supposed to be situated at the Bosphorus, <i>i.e.</i> W. outlet of Black Sea.
Thebes	the capital of Bœotia (<i>vid.</i> Ismenus).
Trinaeria	modern Sicily (lit. the three-cornered land).

NAMES OF PEOPLE

(*N.B.*—Names of the Argonauts are in italics ; little is known of many of them.)

<i>Absyrtus</i>	brother of Medea
<i>Æetes</i>	king of Colchis, father of Absyrtus and Medea.
<i>Æson</i>	son of Cretheus, second king of Iolchos and father of Jason.
<i>Alcīmīdē</i>	wife of Æson and mother of Jason.
<i>Alcmena</i>	the mother of Hercules by Jupiter.
<i>Arcas</i>	son of Jupiter and Callisto ; became on his death the constellation of Areturus
<i>Asclepius</i>	the god of medicine. The Roman <i>Æsculapius</i> .
<i>Asterion</i>	
<i>Atalanta</i>	granddaughter of Minyas. When a babe she was exposed on the hills by her father and was suckled by a bear.
<i>Athamas</i>	king of Thebes, to whom Neptune gave the ram with the Golden Fleece.
<i>Bacchus</i>	god of wine and revelry.
<i>Butes</i>	an Athenian : rescued from the Sirens by Venus.
<i>Ceneus</i>	a Thessalian woman turned into a man by Neptune.
<i>Chiron</i>	a centaur (half-man, half-horse) : lived on the slopes of Mt. Pelion and there instructed Achilles and other famous heroes in the arts and manly virtues.
<i>Circē</i>	the most famous sorceress in Greek mythology : she turned her visitors into animals.
<i>Creon</i>	king of Corinth, cousin to Jason.
<i>Cretheus</i>	first king of Iolchos, father of Æson.
<i>Cyzicus</i>	king of Cyzicum.
<i>Dædalus</i>	a great artist-craftsman : built the Labyrinth at Crete and constructed wings with which he flew over the Ægean. The adj. <i>Dædalian</i> is used to describe any work marked by skilful or curious design or craftsmanship.
<i>Diana</i>	goddess of hunting : in heaven she was Luna, the moon ; in Hades, Hecate. The Greek <i>Artemis</i> .
<i>Echion</i>	son of Hermes.
<i>Eribotes</i>	a physician, brother of Butes.

Glaucē	daughter of Creon, king of Corinth : generally called <i>Creusa</i> .
Hecate	the goddess of magic (see under Diana).
<i>Hercules</i>	son of Jupiter and Alcmena : compelled by Jupiter to serve Eurystheus who imposed upon him the twelve tasks. The Greek <i>Heracles</i> .
Hermes	messenger of the gods : the Roman <i>Mercury</i> .
Hesperides	the daughters of Hesperus, the evening star ; reputed to have lived on the N.W. coast of Africa near Mt. Atlas ; Morris makes them live further east near Carthage.
<i>Hylas</i>	a young Theban, son of Theodamas.
Iris	goddess of the rainbow ; messenger to the gods.
Juno	queen of the gods : the Greek <i>Hea</i> .
Jupiter	king of the gods : the Greek <i>Zeus</i> .
<i>Lyncēus</i>	son of the king of Messene, a town in the Peloponnese ; his name means keen-eyed.
Mars	god of war : the Greek <i>Ares</i> .
<i>Mēdēa</i>	daughter of Æetes, king of Colchis : a sorceress.
<i>Metharmā</i>	a Colchian woman whose identity was assumed by Juno.
Minos	king of Crete : on his death made one of the three supreme judges in Hades.
<i>Mīnŷæ</i>	the descendants of Minyas : their original home was Bœotia ; one branch of the family settled at Iolchos.
<i>Nauplius</i>	a son of Neptune.
Neptune	god of the sea : the Greek <i>Poseidon</i> .
Nereūs	a sea-god : son of Oceanus.
<i>Nestor</i>	son of Peleus : took part in the Trojan war and lived to a very great age.
Œāger	father of Orpheus and king of Thrace.
<i>Ōphēūs</i>	son of Œager : the most famous poet and minstrel of the heroic age.
Pelas	son of Tyro by a river-god : half-brother to Æson, whose throne he usurped.
Phīnēus	king of Salmydessus.
<i>Philius</i>	son of Bacchus and Ariadne.
Phryxus	son of Athamas and Nephele and sister to Helle : destined for sacrifice by Ino, Athamas's second wife ; he escaped with his sister on the back of the golden-fleeced ram, which carried him to Colchis : here he was treacherously slain by Æetes.
Saturn	father of Jupiter, who expelled him from heaven : settled in Latium in Italy, where his reign was marked by so much contentment and prosperity that later generations referred to it as the Golden Age.

Sirens	sea-nymphs who lived in an island in the strait between Italy and Sicily . they beguiled passing sailors with their entrancing songs and lured them to forget everything until they perished of starvation.
<i>Theseūs</i>	son of a king of Athens : killed the Minotaur with the aid of Minos' daughter Ariadne, whom he deserted on the island of Naxos.
<i>Tiphys</i>	a Bœotian : helmsman of the Argo.
Tyro	wife of Cretheus and mother of Pelias by a river-god.
Venus	goddess of love. The Greek <i>Aphrodite</i> .

NOTE.—It was customary at the time Morris wrote to Latinise Greek proper names and to give the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology their corresponding names in Roman mythology ; Morris, however, was not consistent and is occasionally inaccurate ; *e.g.* he should have written *Iolcus* for *Iolchos* and *Cheiron* for *Chiron*, and he uses the Greek *Asclepius* and *Hermes* for their Roman equivalents *Esculapius* and *Mercury*. To avoid confusion, Morris's spelling and nomenclature are retained throughout this book.

THE SOURCES OF THE STORY

THE Quest of the Golden Fleece is perhaps the oldest of Greek myths. The original epic, if indeed it was ever committed to writing, has been lost, but what is probably an abstract of it is preserved in the *Bibliotheca* of Apollodorus (fl. c. 110 B.C.), and there are countless references to the story in Classical Literature. The Greek lyric poet Pindar (fl. c. 475 B.C.) gives a short, vivid account in one of the *Pythian Odes*; but by far the most complete account is in the *Argonautica* of the great Alexandrine scholar Apollonius Rhodius (fl. c. 210 B.C.), a long epic in Homeric hexameters. Many of the side incidents are dealt with by Ovid (43 B.C.-A.D. 17) in the *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*.

The versions that have come down to us differ in various details and Morris did not follow any one consistently. He interpolated incidents for which there is no authority; he invented a new route for the Argonauts' return journey, and he made an attempt to rationalise the rather vague geography of the original story. The main divergencies from the usually accepted version are as follows:

1. The Argonauts were supposed to have spent a year on the island of Lemnos and mated with the women there. Morris omits this incident altogether.

2. In the flight from Æa, Medea is supposed to have taken her brother Absyrtus on board the Argo with her, and when they were nearing the Crimea, with her father close on their heels, she is said to have slain him, cut up his body into pieces and scattered them in the wake of the ship to delay the pursuit of Æetes. In Morris's version Absyrtus's ship is rammed by the Argo and he himself killed by Jason's spear.

3. Pindar makes the heroes return from Æa up the river Phasis and via the Red Sea by a southerly route; the other authorities via the Danube, across the Alps and down one of the tributaries of the Po into the Adriatic. Morris's route is up the Dnieper and Pripiet and down the Vistula into the Baltic.

The incidents of Jason's boyhood in Book I are mainly Morris's own invention, and Book XVII, which deals with Jason's after-life at Corinth, is founded on the *Medea*, a tragedy of Euripides (first performed 431 B.C.).

HINTS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The *Collected Works of William Morris*, with an introduction by his daughter, May Morris (24 vols., Longmans), is the standard Library Edition of his works.

The *Life and Death of Jason*, in the latest revised edition, is published in a cheap handy form in Longmans' *Pocket Library*. The second edition has been reprinted in the *World's Classics* by the Oxford Press.

The *Life of William Morris* by J. W. Mackail (2 vols., Longmans) is the authorised, and by far the best and most comprehensive biography. *William Morris* by Alfred Noyes (Macmillan's *English Men of Letters*) is shorter and is confined mainly to Morris's poetical work. There is a separate chapter devoted to *Jason*. *William Morris* by A. C. Brock (Home Univ. Library) deals with his ideas and their influence on the times.

For minor references to Morris's life and work, see the *Lives* of his friends—*Edward Burne-Jones* by Lady Burne-Jones (Macmillan), and *Rossetti* by A. C. Benson (Macmillan's *English Men of Letters*), and *Ancient Lights* by Ford Madox Hueffer (Chapman & Hall), which contains many entertaining stories of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. There are two short articles, profusely illustrated, on Morris's work in *The Bookman* for Feb. 1911, and in *Four Poets* by Stopford Brooke (Duckworth's *Readers' Library*) there is an admirable, if too laudatory, criticism of his poetry.

The Life and Death of Jason is reviewed by Algernon Swinburne in a volume of his *Essays and Studies* (Chatto and Windus).

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